





The Family Altar



BRIEF DAILY DEVOTIONS

Based on Selected Scripture Texts

By

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Preface to Third Edition.

The very title of this book, than which it would be difficult to find a more appropriate one for a book of daily devotions, coupled with the name of the author, alone served to introduce it into many homes. Above all, however, the contents, as is proper, made it so popular that in the course of only a few years it passed through several editions. The devotions offered for every day throughout the year are the matured fruit of devout meditations upon many great texts of Holy Scripture, as well as a ripe product of a faithful servant of God who has been willing to learn much in the school of tribulations and in the capacity of city missionary has had more ample occasion than the average pastor of a congregation to apply the Word of God in its divinely intended functions of teaching, reproving, correcting, instructing in righteousness, and comforting. 2 Tim. 3, 16; Rom. 15, 4. The author touches upon a multitude of subjects which are of great importance to Christians who wish to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, ever better love Him who first loved them, live unto Him who died for them and rose again, walk so as to please God, and become truly heavenly-minded. He answers many questions which the daily wayfarer to the pearly gates frequently asks himself, the answers to which, however, are not clear to him; also questions which have troubled and harassed his soul. And he has the happy faculty of expressing himself in a manner which appeals to God's children. What is more, the devotions,

to quote a reviewer of the first edition, "are forceful heart-to-heart talks in simple, yet dignified, fluent, and idiomatic English."

THE FAMILY ALTAR, we are confident, will continue to be in great demand in such homes where the incense of the family altar daily rises to the Throne of Mercy and where devotions are desired which are truly grounded on that Word which is able to save men's souls.

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THE PUBLISHERS.

January 1.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and to-day and forever. *Heb. 13, 8.*

Another year has begun to weave its eventful story for us on the restless loom of time. What will its flying shuttle bring us in its new and unforeseen tasks and trials? Will it prove, indeed, a happy new year, as we often wish this morning? It will prove so only when it proves a *holy year* in which our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, abides in us with His changeless love and we consecrate its hurrying hours to His praise and service. He has promised to be with us *always*, even unto the end of the world. He can and will be our sheltering and directing cloud by day and our bright, shining pillar of fire by night in the untrodden paths before us. Let us begin the new year in His saving name, and make no other resolution than that Jesus, *our* Jesus, shall be our One and our All also in this new year of our fleeting life. Then it will prove a happy new year for us. Then we can go to Him for pardon in all our sinful weakness, for sustaining help in all our tasks and trials, for comfort and deliverance in all our sorrows, for a peaceful, blessed end, if this year should be our last. To His almighty and loving hands we can safely entrust our lives, the destinies of our loved ones at home and abroad, the fate of our dear Lutheran Zion, the future of our beloved country. He is and always remains the "Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

To Thee we come, O gracious Lord,
The new-born year to bless;
Defend our land from pestilence;
Give peace and plenteousness;
Forgive this nation's many sins;
The growth of vice restrain;
And help us all with sin to strive,
And crowns of life to gain.

Our Father, who art in heaven, etc.*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all. Amen.

* May be repeated after each devotion.

January 2.

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord, thy God, is with thee whithersoever thou goest. *Joshua 1, 9.*

The first work-day of the new year comes to us with this morning's sun. We hear its call to go forth and labor in our accustomed calling. We know not what this day may bring forth nor all succeeding work-days of the year, what unexpected difficulties, sore trials, severe temptations, they all may have in store for us. Shall we during its course always show all needed wisdom, love, and strength in the discharge of life's sacred duties? And while laboring in our secular affairs, shall we ever forget our heavenly calling? Shall we toil and labor, not from sinful, selfish motives, nor as mere men-pleasers, but as faithful stewards of our God, knowing that He commands: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him"? Col. 3, 17. Oh, what comfort it is to hear our faithful and merciful God coming to our doubting and misgiving heart this morning in His precious Word as He came to anxious Joshua when He had charged him to lead the children of Israel forward into the Promised Land! He assures us, as He did Joshua, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, but be with us wherever we go to strengthen, and defend, and comfort, and help us in the calling in which He Himself has placed us. Let us, then, be strong and of good courage. If God be for us, what or whom need we fear? Every day will bring us nearer to the Canaan above with its blessed rest from all our toil and woe.

I, the Lord, am with thee, be not thou afraid,
I will help and strengthen, be not thou dismayed!
Yea, I will uphold thee with My own right hand,
Thou art called and chosen in My sight to stand.
He will never fail us, He will not forsake;
His eternal covenant He will never break.
Resting on His promise, what have we to fear?
God is all-sufficient for the coming year!
Onward, then, and fear not, children of the day!
For His Word shall never, never pass away!

January 3.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. *1 Tim. 4, 8.*

With the coming of the new year the papers print their customary statistics of bank failures, divorces, murders, and other crimes which occurred in our country during the preceding twelve months. What woeful tragedies these sad statistics disclose! Oh, why do so many men and women make such a pitiful failure of life? The answer is: Because they refuse to go the only sure road that leads to true happiness and success, and that is — *godliness*. Alas! so many people make the mistake of thinking that a godly, Christian life finds its reward only after death. They believe that you cannot be happy in this world if you give yourself unreservedly to the service of God and for His sake forego the pleasures and treasures of this present life. What a fatal mistake! It is true, as a pious Christian you lose much: you lose your guilty conscience, your besetting sinful habits, the slavish fear of death and of Judgment to come. What a blessed loss! But you also gain and profit by leading a godly life. Having granted His children mercy for all their sins, power to resist their evil passions, and sweet peace of conscience, God in His infinite mercy now promises a rich recompense to all those who serve Him with unfeigned piety. He will bless them richly in their daily occupation, will help and comfort them in evil days, and will crown with everlasting glory those who keep the faith to the end. Millions of Christians, though poor and weighed down with crosses and losses, have succeeded in living a happy and contented life. Why? Because they followed after godliness. What will we do in this new year and all the subsequent years of life?

Come, follow Me, the Savior spake,
All in My way abiding:
Deny yourselves, the world forsake,
Obey My call and guiding;
O bear the cross, whate'er betide,
Take My example for your guide.

I am the Light, I light the way,
A virtuous life displaying;
Who comes to Me and follows, aye,
I lead from his dark straying.
I am the Way, and well I show
How men should sojourn here below.

January 4.

Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. *Rom. 12, 2.*

During the present year the old temptress — the evil world — will not grow dumb or change its siren song. Wherever we go we shall hear its seductive invitation: Let us eat and drink and be merry; for to-morrow we die! Woe to us if we forget to watch and pray and firmly to resist the evil inclinations of our sin-corrupted hearts every day! Then we, too, like Demas, Paul's one-time companion in faith and love of Christ, shall go over to the wicked world and become — terrible to think! — enemies of our blessed Lord. But that is just what the love of the world implies. "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." *Jas. 4, 4.* Oh, let us never forget what agony and blood it cost our Savior to redeem us from this present evil world, *Gal. 1, 4*, and therefore in no wise conform our lives to her wicked will and ways. But it is not enough to keep yourself externally unspotted from the world. You can hide behind a monk's or a nun's cowl in the most secluded monastery and still be possessed by love of the world. We ourselves must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. True Christians are transformed, or changed, by living faith in Christ, and therefore have a new mind, a mind different from that of the world. They no longer care for the society and pleasures of the world, but delight in sweet communion with their merciful God and Father in heaven, in the love and grace of their blessed Savior, in proving, that is, learning and doing, the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God revealed in His holy Word. They know of no greater joy or happiness, for "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." *1 John 2, 17.*

In the hour of trial,
Jesus, plead for me
Lest by base denial
I depart from Thee;
When Thou see'st me waver,
With a look recall;
Nor from fear or favor
Suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures
Would this vain world charm,
Or its sordid treasures
Spread to work me harm;
Bring to my remembrance
Sad Gethsemane
Or, in darker semblance,
Cross-crowned Calvary.

January 5.

As thy days, so shall thy strength be. *Deut. 33, 25.*

When his anxious patient asked him: "Doctor, how long shall I have to lie here and suffer?" the physician answered very kindly and very wisely: "Just a day at a time." Just a day at a time this new year will come to us with its new burdens of duties, hopes, and fears. There is no use in brooding over our yesterdays, our past. That is dead and gone, and can never be undone. Whatever of wrong we did in it we can only ask God in His great mercy to forgive for Jesus' sake. But much less does it pay to fret and worry about the *future*. That is in God's hands and will come as He ordains. All we can do, all we are asked to do, is to live for to-day as becomes God's children, faithfully discharging its duties and obligations as our station in life demands. But we Christians have not only an earthly calling in which we are daily to prove faithful stewards of our God, we have also a heavenly calling, in which we are daily to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. O what comfort it is to have our God come to us in His blessed Word this morning and to assure us that, as day after day of the new year dawns, He will give us the needed strength successfully to meet its responsibilities both in our earthly profession and our heavenly calling. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Oh, there is something wonderfully uplifting in the thought that God is with you in all that you do, that He is carrying out that blessed promise of His: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." Is. 40, 31. Then let us give ourselves to-day and all the days of our life into our heavenly Father's hands, and pray:—

Lord, for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray,
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin *just for to-day*.
Let me both diligently work and duly pray;
Let me be kind in word and deed *just for to-day*.
Let me in season, Lord, be grave, in season gay,
Let me be faithful to Thy grace *just for to-day*.

January 6.

Epiphany.

The Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. *Is. 60, 3.*

O Jesus, King of glory!
Both David's Lord and Son!
Thy realm endures forever,
In heav'n is fixed Thy throne;

Help that in earth's dominions,
Throughout from pole to pole,
Thy realm may spread salvation
To each benighted soul.

This is Epiphany, the Gentiles' Christmas Day and a day of great rejoicing for us who are children of the Gentiles. Our heathen forefathers were strangers to the covenant which God made with Israel. They all sat in gross darkness, worshipping dead idols with all manner of cruel rites and superstitions. Like them, we should be without God and without hope in the world if God in His adorable mercy had not sent His well-beloved Son to be Savior not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles. But from eternity our Lord Jesus Christ was appointed to be the Savior of the poor, lost heathen also. Accordingly, it was foretold of Him that He should be a light to the Gentiles and bring salvation unto the end of the earth. *Is. 49, 6.* And on this blessed day the prophecy of our morning's text was gloriously fulfilled when the three Wise Men from the East, the forerunners of the great Gentile host, came and worshiped Christ in Bethlehem. The star that led them on still shines in Christ's blessed Gospel, and has spread its saving light from sea to sea and pole to pole, and is being carried into the darkest heathen lands by devoted Christian missionaries. In our time there are 185 mission societies actively engaged in sending the Gospel to the benighted heathen. They support about 10,000 missionaries, about 5,000 women missionaries, and over 1,000 medical missionaries at an annual expense of 20 million dollars. But in spite of the great foreign mission work carried on by the Christian churches there are still to-day over *eight hundred million heathen* who know nothing of their Savior. How terrible! We Lutherans of the Synodical Conference now carry on mission-work in India, China, and among the Indians and Negroes of North America. Let us all ask ourselves the searching question to-day: How much am I giving of my prayers and my means for the Gospel among the heathen?

Savior, sprinkle many nations,
Fruitful let Thy sorrows be!
By Thy pains and consolations
Draw the Gentiles unto Thee!

Of Thy Cross the wondrous story
Be it to the nations told;
Let them see Thee in Thy glory
And Thy mercy manifold!

January 7.

Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him. *Matt. 2, 2.*

So the three Wise Men asked of King Herod in Jerusalem. They had come a long distance, had suffered many hardships, had braved great dangers on their journey, all in order to satisfy their heart's longing to worship the Savior. But it is important to note that the God-sent star did not lead them at once to Bethlehem. Why not? In order that they might learn from the written Word of God the truth about their Redeemer; for the chief priests and scribes acquainted Herod and, through him, the Wise Men with the recorded prophecy concerning the birthplace of Christ, our Lord. So they found Christ. We still have the star that leads to Jesus — His precious Word, of which He says Himself: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." And His Apostle Peter admonishes us: "We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the Day-star arise in your hearts." 2 Pet. 1, 19. But, oh, how these heathen Wise Men from the East and so many other converted poor heathen in our day put many a so-called Christian to shame with their love and zeal for Christ and His saving and comforting Word! How many Christians there are who never look at their Bible all year! No wonder their hearts remain such dark chambers of sin, of grief, of unconsolated woe, because they neglect the light of God's blessed Word. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," David declares. Ps. 119. Let us zealously study and follow that Word. It will ever lead us to Christ. It will finally lead us to our eternal home.

O Thou, who by a star didst guide
The Wise Men on their way,
Until it came and stood beside
The place where Jesus lay:
Although by stars Thou dost not lead
Thy servants now below,
Thy Holy Spirit, when they need,
Will show them how to go.

January 8.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh. *Matt. 2, 10. 11.*

Various interpretations are placed by Bible students on the gifts which the Wise Men from the East presented to the new-born Savior. Some explain these gifts to mean the gold of faith, the frankincense of prayer, the myrrh of bitter repentance. Others speak and sing of "Sacred gifts of mystic meaning: Incense doth their God disclose, Gold the King of kings proclaimeth, Myrrh His sepulcher foreshows." But be that as it may, there is one gift the blessed Savior demands of us all, which we all can and should bring Him, and that is — *our heart*. "My son" (My daughter), "give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways," He pleads so lovingly. Prov. 23, 26. Think of it! He wants these our sin-corrupted hearts with all their guilt, their carnal love of the world, their estrangement from God, wants them in order to cleanse them, to dwell in them with His Holy Spirit, to sanctify and save them. O what wonderful love! And yet we so often hesitate to give ourselves unreservedly to our gracious Savior. Therefore so many of the illusive stars we love to follow, the stars of earthly fortune, health, joy, and honor — must often lose their light for us and deepest night come upon us, that His saving star might arise before our anxious eyes, and we learn to trust and follow Him. Most blessed are we if we do; for He gives us the assurance: "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Let us earnestly pray and say to Him: —

Ah, look on me with pity,
Though I am weak and poor,
Admit me to Thy kingdom,
To dwell there blest and sure.
I pray Thee, keep and guide me
Safe from my bitter foes,
From sin and death and Satan;
Free me from all my woes.

And bid Thy Word within me
Shine as the fairest star;
Keep sin and all false doctrine
Forever from me far;
Help me confess Thee truly,
And with Thy Christendom
Here own Thee King and Savior
And in the world to come.

January 9.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy, the prophet, saying: "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not."

Matt. 2, 17. 18.

The slaughter of the innocent babes of Bethlehem by cruel King Herod had been foretold by the prophet Jeremiah. Jer. 31, 15. Rachel, whose tomb was at Bethlehem, represents the mothers of the slain children. The prophecy predicts the suffering of the children of God at the advent of Christ. These babes suffered innocently for Christ's sake, and so became the first martyrs in the cause of the Gospel. Their martyrdom teaches us that Christ's kingdom is not of this world. It is not what the carnal-minded Jews were looking for—an earthly kingdom with earthly peace and prosperity for the people of God. The people in Christ's kingdom can here in this life look only for hatred and persecution at the hands of Christ's enemies. But suffering, even death, for Christ's sake involves no real loss; it is only blessed and eternal gain. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Ps. 116, 15. Like all other martyrs, the little martyrs of Bethlehem were taken by the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—who is not the God of the dead, but of the living—into the better home above, where they now live and rejoice before His holy face, forever free from all sin, all sorrow, all suffering, all death. Oh, what comforting, heart-reviving light this blessed truth throws on the suffering and death of our little ones! When we see our living "little saints," whom we know to be in God's saving grace by the covenant of Holy Baptism, sicken, even suffer and die, we are apt to give way to insoluble grief, even as did the lamenting mothers at Bethlehem. And yet these little ones are safe from all harm and danger, safe in the arms of Jesus. Ah, many parents who have a wayward son or a wayward daughter would thank God on bended knee if their child had died in its infancy in its baptismal grace; for then they could hope to meet it again in heaven.

When sickness, pain, and death
Come o'er a Christian child,
How sweetly then departs the breath!
The dying pang, how mild!

That death is but a sleep
Beneath a Savior's care,
And He will surely safely keep
The body resting there.

January 10.

Now, His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when He [Jesus] was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. *Luke 2, 41, 42.*

Being pious Israelites, Joseph and Mary, no doubt, regularly attended the synagog at Nazareth on Sabbath-days. But when the yearly Passover Feast drew nigh, they journeyed from Nazareth to Jerusalem to worship God in His holy Temple. And they did not go alone, but took the Christ-child with them. There is a reason why our passage mentions the fact that they took Jesus with them when He was twelve years old. "At this age, according to the Law, the youth of a Jewish boy ended. In his thirteenth year he became 'a son of the Law' and began to assume the necessary duties and responsibilities. He was presented before the authorities of the synagog and given his phylacteries [little pieces of parchment with extracts of the Law]. The ceremony had a meaning similar to that of confirmation or reception into membership in Christian churches." We see, then, how anxious Jesus' parents were in giving their foster-child the religious instruction which God commands all parents to give the children whom He has entrusted to their care. Alas, so many, many parents neglect this most sacred duty. Many are just as foolish as the mother who was talking with a pastor on the subject of juvenile education and finally said: "Well, pastor, as for myself, I have made up my mind never to put my child under religious instruction until he arrives at the years of discretion." But the pastor warningly replied: "If *you* neglect your child all that time, the *devil* will not." Yes, the devil is busy with our neglected youth, as our overcrowded juvenile courts and prisons testify, and the neglectful parents are mostly to blame. What will they answer God when He asks them: "Where are the children whom I gave you to rear for Me and My kingdom?" God bless all Christian parents who early and late lead their children to Christ at home and spare no expense in giving them a thorough religious training, and have them received into full membership of the Church by confirmation.

Savior, who Thy flock art feeding
With the Shepherd's kindest care,
All the feeble gently leading,
While the lambs Thy bosom share;
Now, these little ones receiving,
Fold them in Thy gracious arm;
There, we know, Thy Word
believing,
Only there secure from harm.

Never, from Thy pasture roving,
Let them be the Lion's prey;
Let Thy tenderness, so loving,
Keep them through life's dangerous way.
Then within Thy fold eternal
Let them find a resting-place:
Feed in pastures ever vernal,
Drink the rivers of Thy grace.

January 11.

And He [Jesus] said unto them: How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? Luke 2, 49.

The first recorded words from our blessed Savior's lips clearly reveal His divine nature. He is more than man; He is the Only-begotten of the Father, God made manifest in the flesh. From His earliest youth to His last expiring cry on the cross we hear this confession from His sacred lips: My Father! Whether He stands in the Temple, disputing with the doctors of the Law, or humbly submits in obedience to His human parents at Nazareth, or receives the baptism of John, suffers the temptation of the devil in the wilderness,—in all He does and says during His life in the flesh He is about His Father's business, carrying out the great and holy mission on which His Father sent Him: the salvation of the sin-lost world. And only because He is the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, only because He is the *God-man*, can He save us and *has* He saved us. Through Him we poor, wayward sinners can come back to God, our heavenly Father, and rejoice in His pardon and love, in all His divine and everlasting mercies won for us through our elder Brother, our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, if we would only strive to realize it more and more from day to day what it means that God, the almighty, everlasting, and merciful God of heaven and earth, is beyond all question our reconciled and loving Father in our blessed Savior! How our hearts would glow in grateful love toward Him; how circumspectly, in holy fear, we should live in His sight; how zealous we should be about His business, glorifying His holy name in all we do and say, loving His Word and spreading it at home and abroad to the farthest corners of the earth! Verily, we should live less for self and more for our Father which is in heaven, and be all the happier for it. May He in His mercy help us to spend this new day of our life and all our other days in His service to the praise and honor of His divine name of Father!

Father of heaven, whose love profound
A ransom for our souls hath found,
Before Thy throne we sinners bend;
To us Thy pardoning love extend.

Almighty Son, incarnate Word,
Our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord,
Before Thy throne we sinners bend;
To us Thy saving grace extend.

January 12.

And He [Jesus] went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. *Luke 2, 51. 52.*

“Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness’ sake, O Lord!” So we hear David praying in Psalm 25. And suffering Job confesses, chap. 13, 26: “For Thou writest bitter things against me and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.” Likewise the holy prophet of God, Jeremiah, declares, chap. 31, 19: “I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” What must *we* confess when we think of the days of our youth? Ah, must we not all humble ourselves before our God, even as these holy men did, and contritely pray: God, be merciful to me, a sinner? Remember not the sins of my youth, my disobedience to my parents, my waywardness and folly, my forgetfulness of Thy holy Word and Law. Praised be God that we have in Jesus a Savior also from all the sins of our youthful days. He was subject to His parents, He perfectly kept for us God’s holy commandment: “Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.” In Him we can find full and free pardon for all the sins of our youth, no matter how many or black they may be, no matter how much they may accuse and condemn us. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us also from our childhood sins, if we but make Him ours in sincere and penitent faith. But what an inspiring example our Lord Jesus has left for all children in His submission and obedience to His human parents! How all Christian children should keep His blessed example daily before them, and ask Him for His divine and loving help to follow in His footsteps! How graciously will He hear their prayer and aid them with His Holy Spirit, He, the children’s loving Friend, who says to all parents: “Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.”

O kind and gentle Savior,
Who art the children’s Friend,
We pray Thee now receive us,
Thy blessing on us send.
Our joys and all our sorrows,
Thou wilt and we should bring,
And lay them all before Thee,
Our good and gracious King.

Let not our ways and doings
Dishonor Thy dear name,
Nor words, nor deeds of evil
Our Christian calling shame.
Grant us Thy grace that boldly
We may our Lord confess;
While for all gifts Thou givest
Thy holy name we bless.

January 13.

Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat. *Matt. 7, 13.*

It is not easy to be a consistent and devout Christian and daily deny yourself and uncomplainingly take your cross and follow in the footsteps of the meek and humble Savior. It is far easier to walk in the broad path of the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life in which you see the children of this world daily walk in such apparent ease and happiness, and to which our sin-polluted heart naturally inclines. But what is the end of this broad way? It is *destruction*. "After the joys of earth, after its songs of mirth, after its hours of light, after its dreams so bright — what then?" Even in this world: "Only an empty name, only a weary frame, only a conscious smart, only an aching heart!" And what then? "Ah, then a sad farewell to a world loved too well — and then the judgment-throne, then the last hope gone, then all the woes that dwell in an *eternal* hell!" For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. While it may cost us many a bitter struggle daily to mortify our flesh and its lusts for the vanities and pleasures of this wicked world, let us ever keep the blessed goal in view for which we are striving as God's redeemed children — and that is *eternal* life. Let us enter in at the strait gate, and that is no one else than our dear Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." John 14, 6. Let us make Him ours in daily faith and for His sake gladly forsake the world and its sinful ways. Though it may seem that we lose life then, we have the glorious promise: "Who-soever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." Luke 9, 24. Living daily *in* Jesus and *for* Jesus means unalloyed happiness here and eternal life in the world to come.

Jesus, my Truth, my Way,
My sure unerring Light,
On Thee my feeble soul I stay,
Which Thou wilt lead aright.

My Wisdom and my Guide,
My Counselor Thou art;
O let me never leave Thy side,
Nor from Thy paths depart.

January 14.

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. *Rom. 12, 12.*

Here the inspired apostle gives us three golden rules to observe. They will insure our daily happiness if we will only follow them. The first is: Rejoice in hope. We Christians are the only people who can do so. Solomon says truly: "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of unjust men perisheth." Prov. 11, 7. Not so with us Christians. We do not hope for earthly joy and happiness, as do the unbelievers. We know that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. But we do hope for God's kind and fatherly help in all the vicissitudes of this poor life, and that when our last hour has come, He will grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven. Nothing, not even death, can rob us of that glorious hope; for we have the countless sure promises of our faithful God and Savior on which to build our hope. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of our God shall never pass away. Having that sure hope, we can also follow the second golden rule: Be patient in tribulation. Though the ways which the Lord leads us may often be dark and tearful, yet we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. He says to us in wonderful loving-kindness: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jer. 29, 11. Why, then, should we not be patient in tribulation? And if at times our faith should grow weak and our Christian courage forsake us, we can employ the third golden rule: Continuing instant in prayer, knowing that, "though not at my time nor at thy time, but still in His own time the Lord will hear and help and provide"; for "He Himself has commanded us so to pray, and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen, that is yea, yea, it shall be so."

Whatever God ordains is good!
 Holy His will abideth;
 I will be still whate'er He doth,
 And follow where He guideth.
 He is my God;
 Though dark my road,
 He knoweth how to shield me,
 Wherefore to Him I yield me.

Whatever God ordains is good!
 He never will deceive me;
 He leads me by the proper path,
 I know He will not leave me,
 And take content
 What He hath sent;
 His hand that sends my sadness
 Will turn my tears to gladness.

January 15.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High; to show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness every night.

Ps. 92, 1. 2.

This 92d Psalm bears the superscription, "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day." It was among the sacred hymns which the pious Jews sang on their weekly Sabbath-day, their day of rest. But we know from Col. 2, 16. 17 that the Old Testament Sabbath was only a shadow or type presaging the true spiritual Sabbath, the rest of soul which our dear Lord Jesus was to win for us through His atoning sacrifice. "Being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you rest." Sheltered by His loving arms, we slept securely during the night and rested from our labors. He, the Keeper of Israel, who neither sleeps nor slumbers, watched over us that no evil came nigh our dwelling. Refreshed and strengthened, we go forth this morning to labor at our daily task. We do not know what new trials and responsibilities may come to us during the day, but we can cast all our cares and anxieties on our faithful God and thus find rest of soul in Him. Oh, what a blessing it is to be a trusting child of God! The poor unbeliever who rises in the morning without a prayer to God for help and protection during the day does not know what strength and peace of mind he forfeits. Restless as the waves of the sea must his heart prove under the day's many vexations. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He giveth His beloved sleep." Ps. 127, 1. 2. But "whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." Ps. 50, 23. Then let us never forget to show forth the loving-kindness of our God, to praise and thank Him for His manifold mercies, and He will bless and sanctify all our days.

Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful
rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice.

Lord, I my vows to Thee renew;
Disperse my sins as morning dew;
Guard my first springs of thought
and will,
And with Thyself my spirit fill.

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
All I design, or do, or say;
That all my powers, with all their might,
In Thy sole glory may unite.

January 16.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Matt. 5, 3.*

It is wonderful to read, yet it is true, for Jesus says so: Right here on this fallen, sin-cursed, woe-begone world of ours there are people who can call heaven — glad, holy, soul-satisfying heaven — their own. What eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, — the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, — all are theirs. Happy people! Though guilty sinners in themselves, their sins cannot harm them, for they have the righteousness that availeth before God. Though assailed by many fightings without and fears within, they enjoy a sweet peace of heart that centers in the love of God. Though often enduring great and sore afflictions in which the hapless worldling would despair, they taste and feel the joy of the Holy Spirit and can exult in the midst of their tears: “My heart for joy is springing, And can no more be sad, ’Tis full of mirth and singing, Sees naught but sunshine glad; The Sun that cheers my spirit Is Jesus Christ, my King, That which I shall inherit Hereafter makes me sing.” Wonderful, thrice-blessed people! Who are they? The poor in spirit, says our Lord. Mark well: *the poor in spirit!* So they are people who know of no spiritual good or beauty of their own with which to boast before God; people who are poor spiritual bankrupts in their own eyes and have no righteousness of their own, no peace and holy joy in themselves. But be they rich or poor in worldly goods, high or low, black or white, they have come to see that no wisdom, power, or glory of the world, no virtue, labor, or suffering of their own can make them rich and blessed in the sight of God. And so they have come to Jesus and now sit at His feet with a humble, contrite spirit, as did Mary of Bethany, and find in Him their righteousness, and joy, and peace, their heaven and their *all*.

I could not do without Thee,
O Savior of the lost,
Whose wondrous love redeemed me
At such tremendous cost;
Thy righteousness, Thy pardon,
Thy precious blood must be
My only hope and comfort,
My glory and my plea.

I could not do without Thee,
I cannot stand alone,
I have no strength or goodness,
No wisdom of my own;
But Thou, beloved Savior,
Art all in all to me,
And weakness will be power
If leaning hard on Thee.

January 17.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. *Heb. 11, 6.*

So many people nowadays decry the importance of faith. They boldly declare that it makes no difference whether or not a man believes or *what* he believes; so long as he does right and loves his fellow-man, he has nothing to fear from God, they say. Over against this unbiblical assertion our text says that faith is so necessary that without it, it is impossible to please God. We all know that a tree cannot exist without its roots. The roots are hidden in the ground and cannot be seen. Yet without them the tree could not grow and thrive and bring forth fruit. So it is with faith. In itself it cannot be seen, and yet it is the very taproot of a God-pleasing life. Without it all virtue, all prayer, all deeds of charity are stained with sin in the sight of the holy God, because the man lacking faith is still an unforgiven sinner in the eyes of God. Can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit? Just as little can corrupt, sinful man do anything pleasing in the sight of God. Only when he lays hold of the gracious promises of God in Christ Jesus with repenting faith and has thus found forgiveness of sin is man *himself* made "accepted in the Beloved," in Christ; and now all he says and does is pleasing to his heavenly Father, though it be tarnished by sinful weakness. By faith man is now God's dear child; God loves him and pardons his sinful weakness for Christ's sake; there is no longer any condemnation to him. Faith, saving faith, now becomes more and more the vitalizing, all-controlling influence of his life, filling him with love for his God and Savior and for his fellow-men. Have we this faith which makes our person accepted in the eyes of God? We cannot produce it nor keep it in our hearts by our own power. It is God alone that works it and keeps it in us through the quickening power of Christ's saving Gospel. Let us diligently hear and heed the Gospel of Christ. And may God preserve us from the wide-spread dangerous opinion of our day that faith is not necessary for salvation!

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine!

January 18.

For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. *Heb. 11, 6.*

In order to come to God and be saved, it is not sufficient to believe in His existence. Even the blind heathen, who have not the Bible, know there is a God, for God has revealed it to them in the works of nature and in their conscience. Rom. 1, 18—32. When infidels declare, "There is no God," they sin against better knowledge. They *know* there is a God, even as all men by nature know this; and it is altogether unnecessary to try to prove that there is a God. Our text, therefore, does not mean to say that we must simply believe in the existence of God, but that we must believe that He is *our* God, *our* kind, heavenly Father, *our* Comforter and Savior, ready at all times to bless us if we diligently seek Him. But no one will believe this of God unless He believes in Jesus and His saving merit. Man's guilty conscience makes him flee from God, even as Adam and Eve fled after their fall into sin, until God Himself has brought the fearing, trembling sinner to accept, and rejoice in, His great mercy as revealed in Christ. Then the believing sinner seeks God diligently all the days of his life, and finds in Him a loving and gracious "Rewarder" beyond all human power to express. When the believing sinner seeks God for pardon in his many and accusing sins, oh, how God in His loving-kindness grants him full and free and everlasting forgiveness and tells him that all his sins are blotted out! When in his sore trials and afflictions the believing sinner seeks God's face, oh, how his heavenly Father comforts him "as one whom his mother comforteth"! Earth has no sorrow, no tear which the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort knows not to alleviate or to dry. Oh, that all sinners would come to God in Jesus, their Savior, and experience in their lives what our heavenly Father says, Jer. 29, 12, 13: "Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and *find* Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast!"
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

January 19.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.

John 2, 11.

Not one of the many miracles which our Lord performed on earth proved harmful to man. They were all performed for man's welfare and salvation. So His miraculous works reveal our Lord as the promised Savior who was to redeem man from sin and all its consequences. This is true also of His first miracle, His turning water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. By gracing this wedding with His divine presence and relieving the want of the young couple, our Lord has for all time shown how highly God esteems holy matrimony. It is true, matrimony is not a divine sacrament, as Roman Catholics hold, for it does not convey and seal to us the redeeming grace of God, as do the only two divine Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But it is not for that reason a mere contract which men can enter and break at will. It is and remains a sacred ordinance of God, which *He* has instituted for the preservation and blessing of our human race. Gen. 1, 27. 28. The reason for so many unhappy marriages in these days is that so many married people no longer regard matrimony as God's holy ordinance and therefore do not take Jesus, their Savior, into their wedded life. Blessed are all the married couples who follow the example of the young married pair at Cana, whose married life is begun and daily continued with Jesus as the most welcome Guest in their house. They will often behold Him turning the water of their want and tears into blessed wine of help and comfort. They will grow in faith and love to Him, will become more attached to each other, and their home will prove an antechamber of heaven itself.

O happy house where Thou art loved the best,
Dear Friend and Savior of our race!
Where never comes such welcome, honored Guest,
Where none can ever fill Thy place,
Where every heart goes forth to meet Thee,
Where every ear attends Thy Word,
Where every lip with blessing greets Thee,
Where all are waiting on their Lord.

O happy house where man and wife in heart,
In faith, and hope are one,
That neither life nor death can ever part
The holy union here begun;
Where both are sharing one salvation
And live before Thee, Lord, always,
In gladness or in tribulation,
In happy or in evil days.

January 20.

Jesus saith unto her: **Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.** His mother saith unto the servants: **Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.** *John 2, 4. 5.*

"Mother Mary, pray for us," is the plea made daily by millions of Catholics; but all in vain. When Mother Mary tried to intercede for her embarrassed friends at Cana, our Lord refused her. He wants us to come directly to Him with our petitions. He will not regard the intercessions of Mary or other departed saints. But when we go to Him with our wants and prayers, He often says to us also as He did there to Mary: "Mine hour is not yet come," and delays the help so eagerly requested. Then let us follow the fine example which Mary sets us in her humble faith, and act upon the advice she gives the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Do not let us eat our heart out in doubt and fear and worry. The Lord's delay does not mean that He will never hear. "Our cross and trials do but press The heavier for our bitterness." In His supreme wisdom and love the Lord has set the hour to turn our sorrow into joy, and when that hour comes, will He help, and not one minute sooner. Instead of growing impatient or even giving way to despair, let us do what He commands, namely: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Pet. 5, 6. 7. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6, 33. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Matt. 7, 7. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." Ps. 42, 11. When His hour strikes, "He'll come to thee all unaware And make thee own His loving care."

If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days;
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move.
Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving;
So do thine own part faithfully,
And trust His word, though undeserving,
Thou yet shalt find it true for thee;
God never will forsake in need
The soul that trusts in Him indeed.

January 21.

But I trusted in Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God. My times are in Thy hand. *Ps. 31, 14. 15.*

David is surrounded on all sides by enemies who hate him without cause and threaten his very life. Even his dearest friends and acquaintances are fled from him. But he does not despair in his extremity. He knows of a faithful friend in whom he may trust, who is both able and willing to save him from all harm. That friend is his God, who has proved His help so often in the past and will not forsake him now. David's God is our God. He has watched over us from earliest youth and has protected us so faithfully against countless dangers of body and soul and will protect us to the end. With David we can cheerfully commit ourselves, our life, our destiny, to His divine and loving providence. "My times are in Thy hand!" Whatever good or ill my times may have in store, Thou dost rule and control them. O what blessed comfort to know that the hand of our *almighty* God is guiding and protecting us on life's rough way! What, then, need we fear? Is not God able to save to the uttermost from every want or danger? And His hand is a *loving* hand. Though He lead us in dark and mysterious paths, no real harm shall come to us. God has only our good in view, He is leading us *homeward*, to heaven, though it be by means of the cross. But it is also a *holy* hand, the hand of our God. Into His divine and judging hand every soul must fall some day. But the sinner shall not stand in His sight; He hateth all workers of iniquity. Then let us prepare to meet Him by living a life of faith and love, of true godliness and holiness. Then can we cheerfully trust Him and leave our times, our destinies, to His all-wise and loving providence.

"My times are in Thy hand,"
My God, I wish them there;
My life, my friends, my soul, I leave
Entirely to Thy care.

"My times are in Thy hand,"
Why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never cause
His child a needless tear.

"My times are in Thy hand,"
Jesus, the Crucified!
The hand my cruel sins had pierced
Is now my guard and guide!

January 22.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Jas. 5, 11.

Only he that endures in his faith unto the end shall be saved. But in order to endure the severe trials often besetting our faith, we must patiently suffer and bear them. Hence Scripture often exhorts us to be patient in our manifold afflictions. In our passage James holds up for our encouragement, first, the example of patient Job. It is true, we often hear Job complaining in his great trial, but that only proves how keenly he felt his suffering, that he was no unfeeling stock or stone. But in the midst of his terrible afflictions he does not fall from faith, does not give way to the tempter, nor curse God and die by his own hands. Patiently he holds fast to that divine and glorious truth: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and endures to the end. Still more encouraging is the example left us by our blessed Lord Himself. His whole life was a chain of sorrow and suffering. Yet "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not," says St. Peter. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth," says Isaiah. True, He also complains in His agony on the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet to His expiring breath He clings to His God and Father and triumphantly declares of His great work of redemption: "It is finished!" And now, says Peter, Christ suffered all these things for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps. Let us, therefore, go to Him in our trials and ask Him for the grace of patience. He is very pitiful, James reminds us. He feels for us and with us in our sorrows and will help us. "He is of tender mercy." Though our afflictions are often the result of our wrong-doing, our merciful Savior will not deal with us after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities; for He has paid for them with His own precious blood and therefore will pardon and help and save us.

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
Trusting only Thee!
Trusting Thee for full salvation,
Great and free.

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall.
I am trusting Thee forever,
And for all.

January 23.

I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. John 12, 46.

Without its source of light and heat — the golden sun — our earth would be and remain a cold, dismal desert, devoid of all life. Without the life-bestowing light of Christ's saving Gospel man abides in gross spiritual darkness and in death. From times immemorial men have asked: "What is the origin of the universe? What is God? What is the purpose of man's life? Why must man die? Is there an eternity? What will man's fate be after death?" To all these great questions man could find no satisfactory answer. All his anxious searching, his wisdom and philosophy left him in darkness. He would still be sitting in the darkness and shadow of death if God's own Son, Christ Jesus, had not come into the world and revealed to man His divine and saving truth. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." John 1, 18. Jesus has brought us God's answer to all the great questions of life. He has dispelled the darkness of sin and the gloom of the grave; He has revealed the secret counsels of God for the salvation of man. In Him we have the fountain of everlasting life. In His light, His saving Gospel, we see the light, the light of divine, saving truth. Whoever believes in Him becomes a child of light, walks in the light of God's holy Word, proves a saving light-bearer to his benighted and dying brethren. Let us thank God, who has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of light. And let us abide in that blessed light. Let us beware of the fate that came to Charles Darwin, the noted evolutionist. In his childhood days, as he himself says, he was an earnest, praying, Christian lad. His father had destined him for the ministry, but he gave himself to the speculations of science, turned his face away from the saving Sun, forgot to pray, and his faith withered and died. God save us from the light of science falsely so called and keep us steadfast in the light of His dear Son!

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "I am this dark world's Light;
 Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
 And all thy day be bright!"
 I looked to Jesus, and I found
 In Him my Star, my Sun;
 And in that Light of life I'll walk
 Till traveling days are done.

January 24.

Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Matt. 5, 4.

Human reason cannot comprehend how man can be blessed in the midst of great and manifold afflictions. Yet that is what our Lord Jesus says here; and it is true in the life of His believing followers. While the unbelieving world laughs and unconcernedly dances its gay round of pleasures, His Christians mourn. They mourn over their sinful weakness; "for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. 5, 17. They mourn when the Lord feeds them with the bread of tears and gives them tears to drink in great measure, Ps. 80, 6; for their faith does not turn them into unfeeling stocks and stones, rather do they feel their afflictions most keenly. Pious Christians also mourn when they see how the holy name of their God is blasphemed by so many, His saving Word despised and rejected, His holy Christian Church maligned and oppressed. They mourn when they see that so many of their fellow-men, whose immortal souls Christ redeemed at such tremendous cost, are serving the devil in all manner of sin and plunging headlong into everlasting perdition. But in the midst of this sad and deep mourning they are not left comfortless. He who bore the cross and suffered the shame and was tempted as they are, yet without sin, their sympathizing Savior, comes to them in His soul-reviving Word and comforts them with divine and heavenly comfort. "Fear not," He calls out to them, "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." Is. 43, 1—3. In all their sorrow and affliction Christians are drawn nearer to their Savior, and are thus blessed beyond all that poor human tongues can tell.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!

Nearer, my Lord, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee,
Who to Thy cross didst come
Dying for me!
Strengthen my willing feet!
Hold me in service sweet
Nearer, O Christ, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!

January 25.

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. *Ps. 50, 15.*

Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward. Job 5, 7. We know the reason why. It is his sin. Every man in this life therefore needs the help which our Father in heaven so graciously offers in our comforting text. Yet in spite of their great and manifold troubles most men do not pray. Very many of them no longer believe in the efficacy of prayer. Rather will they believe in this new, heartless god whom our modern scientists have invented, the law of nature, as they call it, and of which they assert that it rules the world and all life with absolute force. No prayer to God, they say, can change or alter this law. Yet these very men interfere with the law of gravitation every time they lift a stone; they interfere with the law of cause and effect every time they extinguish a fire or overcome a disease. Why, then, should the omnipotent God, the Creator of the universe and its laws, not be able to interfere with the laws of nature according to His wise and loving will? Other men are *afraid* to pray. They know that they have broken the *Moral* Law of God and are sinners in His sight. But for that very reason they ought to pray the more; for God alone can help them from the guilt and power of sin; and He will do so if they penitently ask Him in the name of His dear Son, the Savior of sinners, our Lord Jesus Christ. The most common reason, however, why men neglect prayer is their supposed lack of time. But what a lame excuse that is! They take time for business, for pleasure, for everything else; then why not for prayer? Are they not dependent on God for all they have and possess? Could they live one moment without God and His life-sustaining power? Do they not therefore owe humble and grateful prayer and praise every day to our Father who is in heaven? Let us beware of this snare of the devil that would keep us from daily communion with our God. As God daily blesses and protects us, so let us daily glorify Him with our prayers.

No time to pray!

Oh, who so fraught with earthly
care

As not to give to humble prayer
Some part of day?

Cease not to pray;

On Jesus as your All rely.

Would you live happy, happy
die?

Take time to pray!

January 26.

Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. *Matt.* 8, 8.

It is the heathen centurion, the captain of the Roman guard stationed at Capernaum, that speaks these words to our Lord. He does not ask the Lord to come into his house and to lay His hand upon his afflicted servant in order to heal him. He believes that the mere word of Christ has such divine power that it will effect at once what it commands and promises. That is faith as it should be; and the Lord is so pleased with it that He marvels and says to them that follow Him: "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." *Matt.* 8, 10. And the centurion is not deceived in his faith. His sick servant is healed in the selfsame hour by Christ's omnipotent word. Alas! too many Christians make the great mistake of building their faith and hope of salvation either on the joyful feelings of their heart or on the approval of their fellow-believers or on their own virtue and personal holiness. Alas! they are building the house of their faith on unstable sand. When the winds of adversity blow and the waters of doubt and fear rush against their faith, it falls and buries them in its ruins. The example of the pious centurion is preserved for us in the Gospel that we may learn to plant our faith alone on the sure and infallible Word of our Savior and on nothing else in all the world besides. Though all the world, human reason, our own intellect and foolish heart oppose and cry out against its revealed truth, we must learn to stand firmly and squarely upon it and say: Thus it is written; thus saith the Lord. And heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of our God shall never pass away. "I cling to what my Savior taught And trust it whether felt or not." Man may lie, my own heart may deceive me, but never the truthful and holy God. His Word abideth forever.

Oh, may Thy Word, my God,
A light before me shine
To guide my feet upon the way
To that blest house of Thine!
Oh, may Thy Word, my God,
My guide and counsel be,
When trials and temptations
come,
To turn my thoughts to Thee!

Oh, may Thy Word, my God,
My comfort be and cheer
When friends are false and death
shall take
From me the loved and dear!
Oh, may Thy Word, my God,
Like lighthouse on the sea,
Show where the cruel breakers are
And make a path to Thee!

January 27.

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. *Luke 17, 5.*

How much we need that prayer, especially in these perilous days, when the faith which worketh by love—and that is the only true faith—is dying out in the hearts of so many would-be Christians! In his introduction to Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Luther says: "Faith is a divine work in us, which changes us and regenerates us of God and mortifies the old Adam; it makes altogether different men of us in heart, mind, and all powers and brings the Holy Spirit to us. Oh, this faith is such a live, busy, active, energetic thing that is impossible that it should not always be doing good. And it does not ask first whether good works are to be done; but before this question is raised, it has done them, and it is always a-doing. . . . Faith is a living, bold confidence in the grace of God and is so certain that a man would die a thousand times rather than let this confidence be taken from him. And this confidence in, and knowledge of, the grace of God makes men cheerful, bold, and pleasant to God and all creatures, and this cheerfulness and pleasantness the Holy Spirit produces by faith. Wherefore without constraint man becomes ready and disposed to do good to all, to serve all, to suffer all, and that to the honor and praise of God who bestowed this grace on him. And so it is impossible to separate good works from faith, yea, as impossible as it is to separate heat and light from fire." So far Luther. Is that the nature of *our* faith? While it is true that a weak faith saves as long as it apprehends and retains Christ's saving merit, still let us not be satisfied with a weak and feeble faith; for it is only too evident that a weak faith, unless it increases in strength, will easily fail in temptations and finally perish. Hence let us ask the Lord sincerely and fervently that He would increase our faith, and He will do so through His blessed Word and Sacrament.

Let me be Thine forever,
Thou faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake Thee never
Nor wander from Thy Word.
Lord, do not let me waver,
But give me steadfastness;
And for such grace forever
Thy holy name I'll bless.

Lord Jesus, my Salvation,
My Light, my Life divine,
My only Consolation,
O make me wholly Thine!
For Thou hast dearly bought me
With blood and bitter pain;
Let me, since Thou hast sought me,
Eternal life obtain.

January 28.

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant. *Gen. 32, 10.*

The patriarch Jacob has pitched his tent on the banks of the river Jordan. Years ago he had crossed the selfsame stream a homeless and penniless refugee, who was flying in mortal fear from the wrath of his brother Esau. Now he can return to the land of his fathers, blessed, beyond his fondest dreams, with cattle and goods and with a family. But he knows and feels that he owes his wonderful prosperity to the mercy of his God, who appeared to him on the lonely field at Bethel in the night-watch and promised to be with him and bless him and bring him safely home again. How can Jacob do otherwise than pour out his heart in humble gratitude to this faithful God? — When we review the past days and years of our life, do they not speak to us of many a signal divine blessing that calls for our deep and lifelong gratitude? Many of us started out in life homeless, penniless, as did Jacob; and, lo, the Lord has blessed us beyond all that we deserve. Or we carried for years some secret, tearful burden from which no human power was able to help us. And suddenly the Lord came to our rescue and turned our sorrow into joy. Perhaps the specter of grim want stood knocking at our doors; but lo, God provided bread enough and to spare. Or the angel of death hovered over our sick-bed or over the head of some dear member of our family; but the Lord in His great mercy spared us, spared our loved one. And how about the daily blessings by which we are surrounded as by the very air which we breathe? When we consider how unworthy we are, how cold, indifferent, thankless we often show ourselves toward our God, we must confess: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." *Lam. 3, 22, 23.*

When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise; —
But oh! eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise.

January 29.

And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

John 1, 16.

In all human language there is no sweeter word to the believing sinner's heart and ear than the sweet little word *grace*. What a boundless and fathomless ocean it reveals of God's loving-kindness and mercy toward guilty and dying sinners! It is *redeeming* grace, which spared not God's own Son, but nailed Him to the cross an atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. It is *converting* grace, which could not see the sinner die in his sin, but brought him to saving repentance and faith. It is *sanctifying* grace, which fills the pardoned sinner's heart with loving gratitude to his merciful God and compels him to walk in the paths of righteousness for his blest Savior's sake. It is *comforting* grace, which chastiseth but for a moment. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. It is strong *protecting* grace, which wards off all the fiery assaults of the Evil One and says: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." It is *deathless* grace, which does not perish in the throes of death, but leads to life and everlasting glory. And sweet to think, it is *free* grace, which asks nothing in return from the sinner and therefore remains *sure* grace, founded alone on the unchanging love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And, finally, it is *universal* grace, including all men without exception. The greatest, vilest, bloodiest sinners can be saved and have been saved through it. Only those forfeit its salvation who refuse to accept and believe it. But God forbid that we should ever be guilty of such a sin! Let us daily and joyfully drink of this life-giving stream, until we shall extol its saving power with the countless hosts of white-robed saints on the shores of the crystal sea.

Grace first inscribed my name
In God's eternal book;
'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,
Who all my sorrows took.

Grace led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road;
And new supplies each hour I meet
While pressing on to God.

Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o'erflow;
'Twas grace that kept me to this day
And will not let me go.

January 30.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. *Matt. 5, 5.*

“Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud? Like a swift-flitting meteor, a fast-flying cloud, A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave, Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.” Yet in spite of his few years on earth man, in his sinful pride, fills the world about him with envy, spite, hate, war, and bloodshed. The spirit of meekness, of Christian humility and forbearance, is so unbecoming in his eyes. His is a spirit of arrogance, of contention, of revenge. He resents every interference with his supposed rights, every insult, every injury. He will not rest until he has satisfied his thirst for revenge, though it be to his own hurt and harm. A different spirit rules in Christ’s followers. Though their sinful hearts also feel the promptings of envy, hate, and revenge, they suppress these evil passions in the power of Christ’s Spirit, which dwells in them by faith. They earnestly seek to imitate the example which their meek and lowly Savior left them. Hence they are mild of temper and slow to anger. They will return a soft answer to harsh, insulting language; they rather suffer wrong than do wrong; they forgive their enemies, even pray for them and heap coals of fire on their heads. Above all they patiently submit themselves to the dark ways of divine providence and pray: “Lord, as Thou wilt, deal Thou with me, No other wish I cherish.” Such meek submissiveness seems very unmanly in the eyes of the world. But to the child of God it proves of great blessing: He “shall inherit the earth,” that is, while the greedy, contentious child of the world with his quarrels and lawsuits often loses all he has, God takes care of His meek, forgiving, submissive child, lets him want for no good thing, gives him his portion in this world and all the treasures of heaven in the world to come.

Lord, as to Thy dear cross we flee,
And plead to be forgiven,
So let Thy life our pattern be
And form our souls for heaven.

Let grace our selfishness expel,
Our earthliness refine,
And kindness in our bosom dwell,
As free and true as Thine.

Kept peaceful in the midst of strife,
Forgiving and forgiven;
O may we lead the pilgrim life,
And follow Thee to heaven!

January 31.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. *2 Pet. 1, 20. 21.*

With great show of learning our “modern” critics of the Bible maintain that Holy Scripture is full of ancient myths and glaring errors. Therefore, say they, the Bible is not divinely inspired throughout and not trustworthy in every detail. Alas! with their attractive theories these critics have led many astray from the faith once delivered to the saints and have opened wide the floodgates of unbelief. But in the passage before us God’s holy apostle clearly refutes these wolves in sheep’s clothing and proves their theories to be false. He emphatically teaches the divine origin of the Scriptures, showing that the contents of Holy Writ are not the product of the will and wisdom of man, but that these contents came from God. “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.” How, then, did it come? “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” When God wanted to give His Word to the children of men, He employed holy men for this purpose. In the Old Testament He employed the holy prophets; in the New Testament He employed the holy apostles and evangelists. These holy men of God did not speak or write of their own purpose or will, “but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Ghost moved and prompted them to speak and write for God. When moving the holy men of God to become speakers and writers for God, the Holy Ghost also told them *what* to write and gave them the very *words* to use when writing. Thus St. Paul says in the name of all the holy men of God: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” *1 Cor. 2, 13.* The Holy Ghost taught them *all* the words.” “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” *2 Tim. 3, 16.* The Bible, therefore, is altogether true and trustworthy. We may rely on it in life and death. — “Knowing this first.” The doctrine that the Bible is God’s Book is a doctrine of primary importance. Thus we have a sure foundation for our faith and are able to withstand the attacks of “modern” critics.

The various forms that men devise
To shake my faith with treacherous art
I scorn as vanity and lies
And bind Christ’s Gospel to my heart.

February 1.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. *1 John 3, 20.*

There are times when the believer suffers with heartache, when his sweet joy in the Lord and His great salvation gives way to grievous doubt and painful self-accusations. Those are the times when the Christian realizes most vividly his deep sinful depravity and his overwhelming debt of gratitude to the kind and gracious Lord for saving him like a brand from the burning. Then he falls to complaining about his weakness, his fickleness, his lukewarmness, in loving and serving his blessed Master, and he sighs with the poet: "Dear Lord, and shall I ever live At this poor, dying rate — My love so cold, so faint to Thee, And Thine to me so great?" But in such days it is well to remember that "God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things." He knows not only our sinful weakness, He knows all our thoughts afar off. He knows and sees also our desire to love and serve Him more and better, knows and sees our sorrow over our cold love to Him. And what does He do? Instead of chiding us and rejecting us on account of our fickleness, He hastens to assure us that He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. *Is. 42, 3.* As a mother stills her weeping child, so He comes to us in His precious Word and stills all our fearing and sorrowing by telling us how He loved us in spite of our sin and guilt before the foundation of the world was laid. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." *1 John 4, 10.* And so we learn it again and again that we are not saved by the agony of our repentance or by the fervency of our faith and prayers or by the sanctity of our life, but alone, altogether alone, by the free and unmerited grace of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And that blessed truth restores joy and peace to the troubled heart.

By grace I'm saved — grace free and boundless!
My heart, believ'st thou this, or not?
Why tremblest thou with terror groundless?
Has Scripture e'er a falsehood taught?
Then this word also true must be:
By grace there is a crown for thee.

By grace! this ground of our salvation,
As long as God is true, endures:
What saints have penned by inspiration,
What God by His own Word assures,
What all our faith must rest upon,
Is grace, free grace, through His dear Son.

February 2.

And He saith to them: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. *Matt. 8, 26.*

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. In the fierce gale that tossed their boat about like an empty cockleshell the disciples gave themselves up for lost. All their skill at weathering the storm was at an end. Every moment they feared their little craft would founder and sink with all on board. In their extremity they cried out to the Lord: "Save us!" This was right in them. But when they added in their fright: "We perish," that betrayed their groundless fear, their woeful weakness of faith. How could they perish as long as the almighty Lord and Savior was with them in the boat? The Lord therefore chides them for their sinful weakness; but He graciously hears their cry for help and, arising, stills the raging storm with His omnipotent word. Can we wonder that His disciples marvel at His great power and are mightily strengthened in their faith in Him? But has not the Lord ever thus revealed His majesty and power during the nineteen centuries that the ship of His Church is sailing the storm-tossed waves on its voyage to the heavenly port? What fierce storms of persecution beat against the Christian Church under the bloody persecutions of the first centuries! What soul-destroying errors assailed the Church under Arius, who denied the Godhead of Christ; under Pelagius, who blasphemed the all-sufficiency of Christ's saving grace! Think of the persecution which the Church had to suffer, of the false doctrines with which it was corrupted in the Middle Ages, under the Popes! Think of the schisms, the heresies, that rend the Church in our day! How could the Church have weathered all these terrible tempests if Christ Himself were not at the helm of His ship, guiding and protecting it and finally bringing it safely to land? Therefore let us continue to pray for His Zion; but let us never despair of the safety and final victory of His battling, storm-beaten Church.

Thine honor rescue, Christ, our Lord!
Hear Zion's sighs and help afford;
Destroy the wiles of mighty foes
Who now Thy Word and truth oppose.

Preserve Thy little flock in peace,
Nor let Thy boundless mercy cease;
Let it to all the world appear
That Thy true Church indeed is here.

February 3.

Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. *Matt. 14, 27.*

Lo, in the moonless night, In the rough wind's despite, They
ply the oar. Keen gusts smite in their teeth; The hoarse winds
chafe beneath With muffled roar.

Numb fingers, failing force, Scarce serve to hold the course
Hard-won, half-way, When o'er the tossing tide, Pallid and heavy-
eyed, Scowls the dim day.

And now in the wan light, Walking the waters white, A shape
draws near; Each soul, in troubled wise, Staring with starting
eyes, Cries out in fear.

Each grasps his neighbor tight, In helpless, huddled fright
Shaken and swayed. And lo, the Master nigh Speaks softly:
"It is I; Be not afraid!"

E'en so to us that strain Over life's moaning main, Thou
drawest near, And, knowing not Thy guise, We gaze with troubled
eyes And cry for fear.

A strange voice whispers low: "This joy must thou forego,
Thy first and best!" A shrouded phantom stands Crossing the
best-loved hands For churchyard rest.

Then, soft as is the fall Of that white gleaming pall By
snowflakes made, Stilling each startled cry, Thou speakest: "It
is I; Be not afraid!"

Jesus, Savior, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea!
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal.
Chart and compass come from Thee:
Jesus, Savior, pilot me!

As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey Thy will
When Thou say'st to them, "Be still!"
Wondrous Sovereign of the sea,
Jesus, Savior, pilot me!

When at last I near the shore
And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me,
"Fear not, I will pilot thee!"

February 4.

Hold up my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps slip not.
Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of
Thy wings. *Ps. 17, 5. 8.*

This fervent prayer of David will, no doubt, find an echo in our hearts. As children of God we are all anxious to walk in His paths, the saving paths which He has laid down for us in His clear Word, the paths of faith and love and holiness. But, alas! the world around us is so full of temptations, and we are so weak. If left to ourselves, we are so easily led astray from the paths leading to our heavenly Father's house. There is great danger of our slipping and falling into sin and missing the home-path forever. But when our Lord Himself upholds us with His free Spirit and orders our steps in His blessed Word and lets not any iniquity have dominion over us, then every day will see us walking steadfastly in the narrow path that leads to everlasting life. Again, there is nothing more sensitive than the eye. The least particle of dust pains it and obstructs its vision. Just so it is with faith. The least indulgence in any known sin, the least bit of false doctrine, impairs its power to discern, and to hold us in, the paths of righteousness and peace. But there is comfort and joy in knowing that for Jesus' sake we are most precious in the sight of God, and that He will zealously guard and keep us as the apple of the eye if we abide in His paths. Let a thousand fall at our side and ten thousand at our right hand in these terrible days of general backsliding from God's saving truth, we are safe in His strong keeping. What harm can betide the young fledglings which the mother eagle hides under her mighty wings? So no harm can come to them who entrust themselves entirely to the Lord.

Take Thou my hands and lead me
O'er life's rough way,
With heavenly manna feed me
From day to day.
Alone, my footsteps falter
Or straggle wide;
Lord, who my life canst alter,
Be Thou my Guide.

Take Thou my heart and hide it
In folds of grace,
Though weal or woe betide it,
To know Thy face.
Draw, Lord, of Thy good pleasure,
Thy child to Thee
And grant me faith full measure,
Though naught I see.

Full oft methinks Thou hidest
Thy wondrous might;
Still to my goal Thou guidest
Me through dark night.
Take, then, my hands and lead me
Till life is o'er,
With heavenly manna feed me
Forevermore.

February 5.

I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. *Gen. 12, 2.*

Coleridge, the poet, in a letter written a fortnight before his death and addressed to his godchild, says: "On the eve of my departure I declare to you that health is a great blessing; competence, obtained by honorable industry, a great blessing; and a great blessing it is to have kind, faithful, and loving friends and relatives; but that the greatest blessing, as it is the most ennobling of all privileges, is to be, indeed, a *Christian*." How truly we see that exemplified in Abraham, to whom God addresses the words of our text. Because Abraham walked before God in humble obedience of faith all the days of his life, God Himself was his Shield and exceeding great Reward, blessing him with good fortune, with length of days, with Isaac, the child of his old age, above all with the gracious covenant in Christ Jesus, the promised Redeemer. Even to this day Abraham's name is great among the families of the earth. Even to-day his great example of faith proves a blessing to all who with him believe in their Covenant-God, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Verily, the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it; for, unlike the boasted wealth and fortunes of the world, it is free from the stain of sin and sanctifies the heart and keeps it with God. Let a Christian be ever so humble, poor, and lowly in the eyes of the unbelieving world, he can boast far richer blessings than the richest king or merchant prince possesses. He is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and these abide forever. His name is great, and it is written in the book of life. With his faith, which worketh by love, he proves a blessing to his fellow-men. This sinful world would have perished long ago if it were not for God's blest children, His Christians, who are the salt of the earth and the saving light of the world. *Matt. 5, 13, 14.*

What is the world to me
And all its vaunted pleasure
When Thou, and Thou alone,
Lord Jesus, art my Treasure!
Thou only, dearest Lord,
My soul's Delight shalt be,
Thou art my Peace, my Rest —
What is the world to me!

What is the world to me!
It rapidly must vanish;
With all its gorgeous pomp
Pale death it cannot banish.
Its riches pass away,
And all its joys must flee;
But Jesus doth abide —
What is the world to me!

February 6.

My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. *1 John 2, 1. 2.*

In touching language does the venerable Apostle John here teach us our duty of living a blameless, holy life. In the foregoing chapter he has written of the forgiveness of sins, which we find in the cleansing blood of Christ, the Son of God. Now he continues in burning apostolic love to exhort us and say: "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." The fact that we have found forgiveness with God dare not make us indifferent to sin, but should constrain us to avoid all manner of wrong-doing. "My little children," says the apostle. Ah, yes, we are "little children," walking so unsteadily in God's holy Law of love. What pain it often causes us that we cannot love God and our brethren more and better than we do! How often we sin against them! But for this depressing thought the apostle provides sweet balm and comfort by telling us that if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even our blessed Savior. When Satan accuses us at the bar of divine justice on account of our manifold sins; when our own heart condemns us and we must plead guilty to the charge; when God's justice stands ready to execute the dread verdict of death against us, lo, our Savior arises to plead our cause. And He can appeal not only to God's mercy, which He won for us, but also to God's justice, whose exacting demands and claims He has paid for us in full and forever. He is the propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. So even such great, vile sinners as we are, God, the divine Judge, must acquit, declaring, "Not guilty," for Jesus' sake. But how this sweet, adorable truth must impel us to avoid all wilful sins and to walk in newness of life!

Let us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Flee the world, that would deceive us
And to sin our soul allure.
Ever in His footsteps treading,
Body here, yet soul above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, abide with me;
Walk before, I follow Thee.

February 7.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. *Matt. 5, 6.*

“Understand here,” says Luther, “the external righteousness before men, how we are to conduct ourselves toward each other.” It is the godly life which His disciples lead that the Lord here blesses. His Christians do not live for self, as do the children of the world, but spend their lives in the service of God and of their fellow-men. They earnestly strive to let the light of their faith so shine before men that the latter may see their good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. But with all their endeavor they never attain perfection in their piety; so they hunger and thirst after it, strive and labor for it, as long as they live. And what gives them such lifelong desire for a pious life? It is the Word of their God, as Luther again says: “You can notice this hunger and thirst in a man when he loves to hear and read the Word of God; for the same can assuredly hope of being sustained and comforted by the Word in all kinds of temptation, tribulation, and death. But they which are ‘filled,’ that is, they who do not hear or read God’s Word, but cast it to the winds and despise it, shall finally hunger and thirst so that no one will refresh them with the least drop of water, as happened to the rich man in hell.” — “It is evident that there are many poor people who scarcely have enough dry bread to eat, whom God gives over to poverty because they care nothing for His Word, are slothful in their labor, and lead a disreputable life, whereby they destroy God’s blessing so that He cannot help them, much as He would like to help them. . . . But to His Christians He says: Ye shall find My richest blessing in due time, even here on earth, and afterward all fulness throughout eternity. Hence this promise concerns the pious Christians, who are generally poor and distressed in this world and scarcely have their daily bread. But they are not to grow discouraged, but to continue in their piety and fear of God, hoping that God will not always withhold His blessing.”

O God, Thou faithful God,
Thou Fount that ever flowest,
Without whom nothing is,
Who all good gifts bestowest:
A pure and healthy frame
O give me, and within
A conscience free from blame,
A soul unhurt by sin.

And grant me, Lord, to do,
With ready heart and willing,
Whate’er Thou shalt command,
My calling here fulfilling;
To do it when I ought,
With all my strength; and bless
The work I thus have wrought,
For Thou must give success.

February 8.

Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. *Ps. 100, 2.*

Our Christian religion is a religion of holy joy. "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy," God's messenger said at the birth of the Savior. Since then holy joy in their Savior is the dominant note in the life of Christ's people. Even in their darkest night of affliction they can sing with the psalmist: "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" And this their holy joy finds expression in their daily conduct and communicates its blessed light to their surroundings. Morbid and morose Christians, who are never satisfied with their lot, who can only complain of God's providences with them, who never have a kind smile or cheerful word for their surroundings or habitually grumble when asked to help their needy fellow-men or to give of their means for the support of Christ's kingdom,—such sour-tempered Christians have great need to repent and to learn the blessed truth that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and *joy* in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14, 17. Sinful self-love lies at the root of their sour temper. But where the joy of God's Holy Spirit rules in the heart, there you cannot do otherwise than serve your merciful God and Savior with gladness all the days of your life; there you will thank and praise Him for having made you, a perishing sinner, a sheep of His pasture and for feeding you with the living bread of His saving grace and leading you beside the still waters of His help and comfort. Gladly do you serve Him by serving your fellow-men in their several wants and troubles; and you never regret that you have to do so *much* for His kingdom; you only regret that you cannot do *more*. The Lord, our God, who in His great mercy has made us to be His people, help us to spend this day in His glad service and to live in His presence with joyful hymns of praise.

Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ.

Of His deliverance I will boast
Till all that are distrest
From my example comfort take
And charm their griefs to rest.

February 9.

Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. *Matt. 13, 24, 25.*

In this parable of the tares our Savior reveals a most important truth concerning His Church here on earth. He tells us that along with the sincere and pious Christians there will always be found unconverted, godless people. We shall do well to remember this important fact. It was so from the beginning of days and will remain so to the end of time: Wherever God builds a church, there the devil, as Luther says, is bound to build his chapel also, there impenitent sinners, hypocrites, and false prophets will be found who "steal the livery of heaven to serve the devil in." Small wonder, then, if we see the same conditions prevailing in the Church of our day. We must beware of judging the kingdom of Christ by the false standards which so many apply who expect their church, or congregation, to be composed of none but good and holy people and, when they see the contrary, take offense and forsake the assembly of their fellow-Christians. Not the piety and holiness of church-members, but alone the infallible Word of our Savior can be, and dare be, the hope of our salvation. Where we see the Word of God taught in its purity and the holy Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there is Christ's true Church, to which we must adhere if we would follow the command of Christ. It is not owing to any inefficiency in the Gospel that so many noxious tares are to be found in the Church's field nowadays; it is because "men slept" and the devil is working overtime to destroy men's souls, knowing that he has but a short time left. May God in His mercy help us to be and remain true members of His invisible Church by sincere faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! Then, when the tares are gathered and bound into bundles (to be burned), we shall be among the wheat that is gathered into the barn, among the righteous who shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father.

Fill with the radiance of Thy grace
The souls now lost in error's maze
And all whom in their secret minds
Some dark delusion haunts and blinds.

Shine on the darkened and the cold,
Recall the wanderers from Thy fold,
Unite all those who walk apart,
Confirm the weak and doubting heart.

February 10.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. *Josh. 24, 15.*

John Howard, the great Christian philanthropist, never neglected family prayer, though often no one else than a servant was present to join with him. He always declared that where he had a tent, God should have an altar. Wherever he was, the duty was attended to when the accustomed time for prayer came. Nothing and no one was allowed to interfere with it; and every call of business had to wait outside the locked door till it was ended. We sorely need such praying John Howards in our homes to-day. Many a bridal couple has chosen this text for its wedding sermon and at first also practised it by having family prayer. But in the course of time, for one reason or other, the family devotions were neglected, and, with them, joy, peace, and happiness fled the home. However, it is not too late to mend; and where there is a will, there is a way, especially in such a serious and vital matter as a whole family's happiness. Let the neglected family prayers again be taken up in the home. Where the custom of family devotion has never been observed, let it at once be introduced. God's Word will not be read in vain; joint prayer will prove an unfailing source of blessing. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," is the promise of our Savior. The holy fear of God will become the light, trust in God the strength, glad service of God the shining glory, of such a home. Husband and wife and children will learn to serve the Lord in faith and hope, in joy and sorrow, in life and death. The angels of peace, of kindness, of unalloyed happiness, will dwell at its fireside, and you can write over its doors: "This is a house of God; this is a gate of heaven." Let us never, therefore, neglect our family prayers. Let us get up a little earlier in the morning in order to meet in common worship at the Throne of Mercy rather than begin the day without God's Word and its sure blessing. God's Word is not a vain thing; it is our life.

O blest the house, whate'er befall,
Where Jesus Christ is all in all;
Yea, if He were not dwelling there,
How poor and dark and void it were!

Then here will I and mine to-day
A solemn covenant make and say:
Though all the world forsake Thy Word,
I and my house will serve the Lord.

February 11.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with Him. Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elias." *Matt. 17, 3. 4.*

Shall we know each other in heaven? Pious Christians often ask this question, at times under brimming tears, when death has taken their loved ones from them and laid them in the silent grave. Shall we know our beloved in heaven? "O ye weary, sad, and tossed ones, Droop not, faint not by the way! Ye shall know the loved and just ones In that land of perfect day." In the all-revealing light of heaven's glory Peter at once recognized the two holy men who had come from heaven to talk with his transfigured Lord, Moses and Elias, although he had never seen them before in this world. So shall we know all the saints of God in heaven at once. Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known. 1 Cor. 13, 12. Though we and our loved ones shall be changed into the likeness of Christ's own glorious body, Phil. 3, 21, and shall be forever free from all the imperfections of this sinful flesh, we shall not be strangers to one another, but shall recognize each other at a glance. And who will describe the bliss of that joyful meeting? "O happy world, O glorious place, Where all who are forgiven Shall find their loved and lost below And hearts, like meeting streams, shall flow Forever one, in heaven!" Who can blame Peter for wanting to stay forever in that glory at the sight of which he was beside himself with joy? But his time was not yet come. There were still long years of service in his Master's cause before him. However, he never forgot that vision of heaven there on the mountain; see 2 Pet. 1, 16—18. May the sure hope of heaven which we have through our blessed Redeemer move us daily to set our affection on things above, until we shall see our Savior face to face and with Him all our departed loved ones who died in the Lord!

Oh, then what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore!
 What knitting severed friendships
 up,
 Where partings are no more!
 Then eyes with joy shall sparkle
 That brimmed with tears of late;
 Orphans not longer fatherless,
 Nor widows desolate.

Bring near Thy great salvation,
Thou Lamb for sinners slain;
 Fill up the roll of Thine elect,
 Then take Thy power and reign!
 Appear, Desire of nations!
 Thine exiles long for home;
 Show in the heavens Thy promised
 sign.
 Thou Prince and Savior, come!

February 12.

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only. *Matt. 17, 8.*

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds In a believer's ear! It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, And drives away his fear. It makes the wounded spirit whole And calms the troubled breast; 'Tis manna to the hungry soul And to the weary, rest." — Peter and his two companions fell to the ground in overpowering fright when God spoke to them in His unapproachable majesty from the bright cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration. But all terror left them when they felt Jesus touching them and heard His reassuring voice: "Be not afraid." Lifting up their eyes, they no longer beheld Moses and Elias and the vision of heaven's rapturous glory; they saw no one save Jesus only. And in Him they were sufficiently and abidingly blessed. Happy are we if, in all the terrifying conditions that may surround us in life or in death, we see no man nor anything save Jesus only. When the terrifying light of God's accusing and condemning Law shines into our trembling hearts, happy are we if we see no merit or worth in ourselves, but see Jesus only and His all-sufficient and redeeming merit. When great misfortune comes upon us and it seems as if God and man had forsaken us, happy are we if we see Jesus only and hear His reassuring voice: "Be not afraid. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In the throes of death, when our agonizing soul cries out in fear: "Save, save, Lord, I perish!" happy are we if with our closing eyes we can still see Jesus standing near and hear Him say: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Thou shalt not die, but live with Me in My Father's house above."

Jesus! my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End, —
Accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath;
And may the music of Thy name
Refresh my soul in death!

February 13.

To obey is better than sacrifice. 1 Sam. 15, 23.

Infidels take great offense when reading in the Bible that God commands Moses and other servants of His utterly to destroy certain heathen nations. But God acts here as a wise and loving physician, who amputates a diseased and incurable limb from the human body in order to save life. So God cut off those depraved heathen nations in order that the human race, and especially His chosen Israel, from which the Savior was to come, might be kept from being infected and destroyed by their inhuman vices. Now, God had commanded King Saul utterly to destroy the abandoned race of the Amalekites and all its possessions. But Saul disobeyed; and when confronted by the prophet Samuel and rebuked for his disobedience, he excused himself by declaring that the people had taken of the forbidden spoil, the best of the sheep and of the oxen, in order to sacrifice them to God. But Samuel reminds him that in God's eyes obedience is better than sacrifice, and the disobedient king must hear the awful sentence against him: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king." And, alas! Saul had by his disobedience forfeited not only his kingdom, but also the favor of God and his salvation. Let us take Saul's warning example to heart. Let us beware of all self-chosen paths in life, of all self-elected forms of worship. So many misguided and fanatical spirits would serve God in utter disregard of His revealed will, after their own way of thinking, and so come under God's just condemnation. And there is also much lip-service even among so-called orthodox Christians. But let such men beware! Our Savior says: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." God help us, for Jesus' sake, to believe and to do at all times what He clearly revealed in His holy Word for us to believe and to do. Only he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Create in me a new heart, Lord,
That gladly I obey Thy Word
And naught but what Thou wilt, desire;
With such new life my soul inspire.

Grant that I only Thee may love
And seek those things which are above,
Till I behold Thee face to face,
O Light eternal, through Thy grace.

February 14.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. *Matt. 5, 7.*

Man's inhumanity to man reddens the pages of history. Outside of Christianity the world knows nothing of pitying and helpful mercy. In no heathen country will you find compassion for the unfortunate and the afflicted; no such public institutions of mercy as the numerous hospitals, asylums for the aged, and the poor, and the blind, and other homes of refuge as we have in our Christian countries. It is true, we often read of rich Jews and millionaire infidels bequeathing large sums for charitable purposes; but they do so mainly from selfish and vainglorious motives. They are not actuated by the merciful Spirit of Christ. The unconverted mortal knows nothing of true pity, especially in dealing with his enemies. His maxim in life is: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." It is only in Christ's humble followers that we find this disposition to be merciful toward all men, be they friend or foe. Having Christ's merciful Spirit in them by faith, they have at the same time a merciful *heart* that pities their afflicted fellow-men. They have merciful *eyes*, which are quick to see human sorrow and distress. They have merciful *tongues*, ever ready to comfort and, above all, to defend their slandered or unjustly criticized neighbors. And they have merciful *hands*, filled with charitable and helpful deeds. Though they know Christ's promised blessing, they are no mercenary hirelings, who do good solely for the sake of reaping a reward. They know they have been paid in advance and paid in full over and over again by the undeserved mercy which God has shown them, and daily shows them, in Christ, their blessed Savior. So they show mercy for mercy's sake and never ask: "What shall we get for it?" May we all prove to be such merciful Christians in thought, word, and deed to-day and as long as we live!

Lord, let me do to others
As Thou hast done to me:
Love all men as my brothers
And serve them willingly,
With ready heart, nor seek my own,
But as Thou, Lord, hast helped us,
From purest love alone.

February 15.

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. *Luke 10, 41, 42.*

Our beautiful text brings home to every one of us the question, What is your attitude toward your Savior? Do we, like Martha, neglect to listen to His saving Word because we think that we shall serve Him better if we engage in all manner of social church-work or work of Christian charity? Is that not the attitude of the much-applauded "institutional churches" of our day and, alas, also of so many well-meaning Christians in our own midst? What a great mistake they are making! False prophets, false Christians, can and do spend their lives in such activities, and yet they miss the one thing needful, the Word of Christ, and in it their Savior. No amount of benevolent charity or of social church-work, though done with the best of intentions, can save us. Jesus, and Jesus only, can and will save us with His blessed Word. The main thing, therefore, is to do as Mary did. When Jesus comes to teach us His saving Gospel, always be ready to sit at His feet and hear Him. In His Word He gives us Himself with His Holy Spirit, who works and fosters faith and love and hope in us and gives us wisdom and strength to serve His cause in the manner pleasing to Him. Without Jesus all church-work and all charity is of no avail. We must first take Jesus and His Word into our hearts, and then we can serve Jesus in our lives. First faith, then charity. First Jesus and then service for Him.

One thing's needful! Then, Lord Jesus,
Keep this one thing in my mind;
All beside, though first it please us,
Soon a grievous yoke we find;
Beneath it the heart is still fretting and striving,
No true, lasting happiness ever deriving.
The gain of this one thing all loss can requite
And teach me in all things to find true delight.

How were Mary's thoughts devoted
Her eternal joy to find,
As intent each word she noted,
At her Savior's feet reclined!
How kindled her heart, how devout was its feeling,
While hearing the lessons that Christ was revealing!
For Jesus all earthly concerns she forgot,
And all was repaid in that one happy lot.

February 16.

Many are called, but few are chosen. *Matt. 22, 14.*

In chapter seven of Revelation the inspired seer beholds a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues standing before the throne of the Lamb and rejoicing over their salvation. Great is the number of the chosen, of God's elect, when viewed by itself. But few are the saved when compared with the vast number of those who hear the Gospel-call, but do not come to Christ and are thus lost. Why, then, is it that so many are called, but few chosen? From Christ's parable of the laborers in the vineyard, *Matt. 20, 1—16*, as also from other clear passages of Holy Writ we learn that the fault lies *not* with our *merciful* God, who wants to save each and every sinner. The fault lies alone and altogether with so many sinners who reject the Gospel-call in unbelief. They reject it because they love sin, or because they do not want to be saved by grace. But our election and salvation is by grace and not by any work of ours; otherwise *grace is no more grace*. *Rom. 11, 6*. Let us hold fast that divine truth, and we shall have no trouble about our final salvation. God's undeserved grace, which called us to faith in Christ, will also preserve us in that saving faith unto the end. In Christ, our loving Savior, we must look for, and find, our election, and then this doctrine will prove of wonderful comfort, as our fathers say in the Formula of Concord: "Therefore this doctrine affords also the excellent, glorious comfort that God was so solicitous concerning the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian and so faithfully provided therefor that before the foundation of the world was laid, He deliberated concerning it and in His purpose ordained how He would bring *me* thereto and *preserve* me therein." It is because of this our election by grace in Christ that we can confidently declare with Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? . . . I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

When I can read my title
clear
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eyes.

Should earth against my soul
engage
And hellish darts be hurled,
Then I can smile at Satan's rage
And face a frowning world.

February 17.

Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me. *John 5, 39.*

Here the Lord Jesus tells us how we are to read the Bible. We are not to read His holy Word from idle curiosity or as mere history or literature. We are to read it for the salvation of our souls and should therefore seek our blessed Savior in the Bible; for it was given us by God for the purpose of revealing to us the person, life, and work of His dear Son. Therefore: "Seek thou Jesus and His light, Or thou wilt stay in sinful night" when reading the Bible. Luther says: "Whoever, therefore, would read Scripture profitably, let him see to it that he seeks Jesus in it, and he will surely find life eternal. Again, when I do not study and read Moses and the prophets in the Scripture to learn that Christ has come from heaven for the sake of my and all men's salvation, that He became man, suffered, died, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven, that I might have in Him reconciliation with God, forgiveness of all sins, grace, righteousness, and eternal life,—all my reading in Scripture will avail me nothing for salvation." Under popery, when the Bible was practically unknown, men could not read and study it. But now that it has been restored to us through the blessed Reformation and spread to all the four quarters of the globe, no man can have any excuse for not reading, or searching, the Scriptures. If there be conceited men or women who declare that they can learn nothing more from the Bible because they have read and studied it from cover to cover, Luther gives them the advice to feel their ears and find out whether they have not grown a nice pair of long donkey-ears. No mortal, and if he live to be as old as Methuselah, will ever outgrow his need of the Bible, for he will never outgrow his need of the Savior. God make and keep us diligent and prayerful students of His holy Word!

How precious is the Book divine,
By inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines
shine
To guide our souls to heaven.

It sweetly cheers our drooping
hearts
In this dark vale of tears;
Life, light, and joy it still imparts
And quells our rising fears.

This lamp, through all the tedious night
Of life, shall guide our way,
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day.

February 18.

Anniversary of Luther's Death.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me, His prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God. *2 Tim. 1, 8.*

This is the anniversary of Luther's death; for on this day, in the year 1546, Luther died at Eisleben, his birthplace, at the age of sixty-two years. The papists and other enemies of the pure Gospel still hate the great Reformer's name and work. We, however, by the grace of God, glory in his Reformation and are not ashamed to be called after his name. For what is the meaning of the term *Lutheran*? And what is its history? Luther desired no honor for his own person. When Romanists, therefore, began to call the followers of the restored Gospel "Lutherans," the Reformer wrote (in 1522): "I ask that people would not mention my name and not call themselves Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? I am sure the doctrine which I preach is not mine. Nor was I crucified for any one. . . . I am not, and do not want to be, any man's master. Together with the Church I have the one universal doctrine of Christ, who alone is our Master." But when weak Christians, in order to escape the persecutions stirred up by the Romanists, denied that they were Lutherans, the Reformer issued this warning: "If you believe that Luther's doctrine is evangelical [is the Gospel-truth] and the Pope's doctrine unevangelical, then you must not so completely drop Luther, else you would thereby also drop his doctrine, which you know to be the doctrine of Christ." He then holds up to them these words of Paul to Timothy and shows them how Timothy would have been ashamed of the *Gospel* if he had been ashamed to own Paul as his teacher. Paul was in prison, not for his person's sake, but for the Gospel's sake, which he had preached so faithfully. And Christ says of His messengers: "He that receiveth you receiveth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me." To be a "Lutheran," then, means to be a Christian who, like Luther, in the power of God, abides by every clear word of Scripture. Hence we cannot be ashamed of the name Lutheran, unless we want to be ashamed of the Word of God. We bear the shame of Christ's Gospel by being called Lutherans; but that is honor and glory.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." *Matt. 5, 11. 12.*

February 19.

And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying: "I will; be thou clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. *Matt. 8, 2. 3.*

Afflicted with his fatal and incurable disease, this poor leper comes to the only Physician who is able to help him, to our omnipotent and merciful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And he comes in the right way, in humble, submissive faith. He does not insist on a cure from his malady, but gives himself entirely into his Savior's hands, ready to suffer his terrible affliction to the end of his life if it be the Lord's will. Such humble, submissive faith always finds acceptance with the Lord. He grants the prayer of the poor suppliant and cures him, thereby revealing Himself as the promised Redeemer, come to save His people from their sins. By nature we are all afflicted with the fatal and incurable malady of *sin*. No human power can save us from it. Could our zeal no respite know, could our tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone, Christ must save us, He alone. And He *has* saved us, God be praised, has saved us by the sacrifice of His all-atoning and divine blood. Now we can sing with grateful hearts: "There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins, And sinners plunged beneath that flood Lose all their guilty stains." But is our faith like that of this poor leper here? Are we willing to give ourselves entirely into our blessed Savior's hands when suffering some great sorrow or even when afflicted with an incurable disease? Let us guard against all self-will, all impatience, though the night of our sorrow be dark and long. As long as Jesus is with us and we can pray to Him, all is well with us. He will not let us suffer one whit more nor one minute longer than is necessary for our temporal and eternal happiness. He loves us and wants to save us. What more can we ask?

Should grief or sickness waste away
My life in premature decay,
My Father, still I strive to say:
Thy will be done.

Let but my fainting heart be blest
With Thy sweet Spirit for its guest;
My God, to Thee I leave the rest:
Thy will be done.

February 20.

But, now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior. *Is. 43, 1—3.*

There is an inspiring picture in which the artist has depicted a rushing, noisy waterfall, with a sturdy tree at its side harboring a little bird on one of its branches. The little songster tucks his head under his wing and is perfectly at ease. Under the painting you read the telling word: *Peace*. What a fine representation of the fearless peace that ought to fill our souls in these tempestuous times! What need we fear in the light of such inspiring words of our gracious God as our text contains? It is said, that God exhorts His people over seventy-six times in the Scriptures with the encouraging words: "Fear not." And He furthermore assures us in our text that He has made us; that He has redeemed us from all the powers of sin and Satan; that He has called us by our names, as He did in Holy Baptism, where He made us His beloved children. What need we fear if we give ourselves entirely into His almighty and loving hands? Did He not protect Israel when it passed through the Red Sea and later through the Jordan River? Did He not shield the three men in the fiery furnace against the kindling flames? Where is there any danger, be it ever so great, from which He cannot save? Let the waters of social unrest, rebellion, hate, and persecution rage and roar, like the contented bird in the painting we can rest and be at peace, knowing that it is omnipotent Power that protects us. With the poetess we sing:—

Rocked in the cradle of the deep,
I lay me down in peace to sleep;
Secure I rest upon the wave,
For Thou, O Lord, hast power to save.
I know Thou wilt not slight my call,
For Thou dost mark the sparrow's fall.
And calm and peaceful is my sleep,
Rocked in the cradle of the deep.

February 21.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. *Matt. 5, 8.*

"Who can say, I made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" asks Solomon, Prov. 20, 9; and we must all answer: "Not I." The sad and terrible picture which our Lord Jesus draws of the human heart, and therefore also of our hearts, is only too true. He says, *Matt. 15, 19, 20*: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." But thanks be to God, Jesus can do what we cannot do, what no man can do — He can purify our sinful hearts; and He does so through His converting and sanctifying Gospel. Whoever repents of his sins, of his original sin and of his actual sins, and learns to trust implicitly in the gracious Gospel-promises of his Savior, has found forgiveness for all his sins — original and actual — in the sight of the holy God. He "is clean every whit," John 13, 10, and sees God, not with physical eyes, — for that is impossible, since God is a spirit, — but in faith as *his* loving and reconciled God in Christ Jesus, his Savior. And the more he grows in faith, the more such a pardoned sinner sees of the wonderful goodness and soul-elating mercy of his God and Savior. Every day of his earthly existence sees the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings, rise brighter and brighter on the horizon, until He reveals to him His golden fulness and undiminishing glory in the land of perfect day, the land of the blessed that knows no night. There we shall see our God and Savior face to face, as John declares, 1 John 3, 2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is
theirs;
Their soul is Christ's abode.

The Lord, who left the heavens
Our life and peace to bring,
To dwell in lowliness with men
Their pattern and their King:

He to the lowly soul
Doth still Himself impart
And for His dwelling and His
throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

Lord, we Thy presence seek;
May ours this blessing be:
Give us a pure and lowly heart,
A temple meet for Thee.

February 22.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Matt. 9, 35.

As Christians we are called to be soul-winners for our Lord. When we join our efforts with those of our fellow-Christians in our churches and synods, we can accomplish much for the sacred cause of our Lord's glorious kingdom. In our text we see our Savior engaged in His saving Gospel-work; and we can learn from Him that our foremost duty is to carry on Home Missions; for He preaches the Gospel first of all in the cities and villages of His home country. When we hear an authority on religious conditions in our land tell us that "sixty million of our more than one hundred million citizens have no connection with any Church; fifteen million children in this country receive no religious guidance whatever; thirty-five million over ten years of age are outside the membership of any Church; ten thousand small towns west of the Missouri River rarely, if ever, hear the Gospel preached in them,"—we see the urgent need of Home Missions. Again, we can here learn from our Savior what we are to preach in our mission-work—not the vagaries of this new, so-called Social Reform Gospel, but the Gospel of His kingdom, the old, old Gospel of God's saving and forgiving love over against poor, perishing sinners in Jesus, His only-begotten Son. That Gospel has the divine power to change the heart of sinful man; and where it brings sinners to repentance and faith, there the fruits of a holy, Christian life will not be wanting. Finally, we see that our Savior also pities the sick and the poor in their distress and helps them in their bodily afflictions. We may therefore well establish medical missions, hospitals, orphanages, and other institutions of mercy, in which we attend to the bodily wants of our fellow-men, but also, for the sake of their immortal souls, bring them the blessed Gospel of their Savior.

Our country's voice is pleading,
Ye men of God, arise!
His providence is leading,
The land before you lies;
Day-gleams are o'er it bright'ning,
And promise clothes the soil;
Wide fields, for harvest whit'ning,
Invite the reaper's toil.

Go, where the waves are breaking
On California's shore,
Christ's precious Gospel taking,
More rich than golden ore;
On Alleghany's mountains,
Through all the western vale,
Beside Missouri's fountains,
Rehearse the wondrous tale.

February 23.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. *John 1, 29.*

John the Baptist points with uplifted finger to the approaching Jesus of Nazareth and exclaims: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." His Jewish hearers could not mistake his meaning, for every day a spotless lamb was sacrificed before their eyes in the Temple as a propitiation for their sins. The lamb thus sacrificed was a prophetic symbol of the coming Savior, who, as the true Lamb of God foretold by Isaiah (chapter 53), was to suffer and die and thus obtain eternal redemption for us. The sacred time of Lent repeats the message of John and again directs our attention to our suffering Savior. "Behold!" it cries with pleading and insistent voice, "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and therefore *your* sin! Will we not open our ears and hearts most reverently to its sacred, saving message and behold our Savior, not with indifferent eyes, as the unbelieving world beholds Him, nor with hate-filled, blasphemous eyes, as the Jews did and all mocking infidels do to-day, but with penitent and believing eyes, as did the dying thief on the right of our crucified Savior, who prayed to Him with a sincere, contrite, and believing heart: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," and who was pardoned and forever saved as the first-fruits of our Lord's bitter Passion? Oh, blessed shall we be if we thus behold our suffering Lord! Then shall we also see with rejoicing and adoring hearts how He has taken away all our sin and guilt out of the sight of the holy God, how He has redeemed us forever from the power of the devil and gained for us the favor of His heavenly Father. And if death should come to us, we shall hear Him say to us what He once said to the dying thief: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

O Lamb of God most holy,
All free from spot and stain,
O help us now to serve Thee,
And sing Thy praise again!

O Lamb of God most lowly,
So great, and yet so meek;
May we, when pride allures us,
Thy lowly spirit seek!

O Lamb of God most gentle,
So kind and good and true;
May we, when passion tempts us,
Thy gentleness pursue!

O Lamb of God most lovely,
To Thee our faith would flee;
Reveal to us Thy beauty
And win our hearts to Thee!

February 24.

Then He took unto Him the Twelve and said unto them: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished."

Luke 18, 31.

Of their own free will Adam and Eve fell away from God into sin and thus brought sin and woe and death on their children — the whole human race. Of His own free and loving will did the Son of God and Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, go up to Jerusalem to enter on His vicarious Passion in order to redeem His brethren after the flesh — all the guilty sons of Adam. He took his twelve disciples with Him, that they might be witnesses of His atoning death and become His messengers to proclaim its saving truth to all the world. We, too, are asked to accompany our Lord on His way to Jerusalem in this holy time of Lent. We can do so only when we follow Him with *attentive* and *reverent* spirit to hear and see all the things that happened to Him at Jerusalem. Are we not the sinners for whose sake He suffers all these cruelties and tortures? Again, we must go with Him in a *prayerful* spirit. By nature we are blind concerning the true cause and the glorious fruit of our Lord's Passion. We are like the disciples, who, when Jesus spoke to them of His suffering and death, "understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them." Does Lent prove of so little blessing to us because we pray so little for opened eyes during this solemn season? O let us sincerely cry to the Lord with the blind man at the gate of Jericho: "Lord, that I may receive my sight," that is, that I may understand my guilty part and my personal redemption in Thy suffering. But the main thing is that we accompany our Lord in *true* faith and learn to say: "For me, for my salvation, dost Thou suffer thus, O my Lord and my God." With such humble, trusting faith in our heart, let us go with our Lord on His way to suffering and death; and may He bless every step we take with Him!

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of all men bearing;
'Tis laden with the sin of earth,
None else the burden sharing.
It goes its way, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
Its spotless life to offer;
Bears shame, and stripes, and wounds, and death,
Anguish, and mockery, and saith,
"Willing all this I suffer."

February 25.

God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Rom. 5, 8.*

Man can show no greater love than to die for his friends. No mortal, however, will think of giving up his life for outright enemies. What shall we say, then, of this wonderful love of God, who spared not His only-begotten Son, but gave Him into death that His enemies, we sinners, might live? Verily such divine love passes all human understanding. But, again, what shall we say when we hear infidels declare that they cannot believe in this love of God nor in the atonement of Christ because it goes against their ideas of justice? "How can God be just if He can sentence His holy and innocent Son to death in place of sinners?" they ask. "If this is not the worst kind of injustice to punish the innocent instead of the guilty, what, then, is injustice? No human judge would do such a wicked thing. How much less, then, a just and holy God!" But these poor, blind people only betray their woeful ignorance as regards both God's justice and God's love. Because something is impossible for man, does it follow that it must also be impossible for God? What does love, true love, mean? It means *sacrifice*. What sacrifices will not a loving father or mother bring for their children, especially for their sick, even for their *wayward* children, who are breaking their parents' hearts with their sinful habits! How often do our hearts beat with glowing admiration when we read of firemen or locomotive engineers or other heroic men who suffered death rather than leave their post of duty and thereby endanger the lives of utter strangers given into their charge. Now, if poor, sinful mortals can love to such an intense degree, why not God, the Source and Fountain of all love and mercy, in a much higher, in a truly *Godlike* degree, a degree that surpasses all the understanding of man? — Now God can pardon sinners because His *divine* justice is satisfied through His own *divine*, self-sacrificing love.

O thou wonderful, adorable love of God manifested in Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: we pray Thee, draw our hearts to Thee through the story of our Savior's sufferings and death and make us Thine in life, in death, throughout eternity. Amen.

February 26.

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. *1 Tim. 1, 15.*

While an epidemic of yellow fever was raging in our Southern States, a young man was stricken with the fatal disease and grew oblivious to all around him. Shortly before his death, however, his consciousness returned. When his pious sister, who nursed him, noticed it, she bent over him and asked: "Brother, you are about to leave us. What is your hope in death?" And the dying young man answered faintly, yet very distinctly: "Sister, this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and then peacefully passed away. That young man was ready to die, because in his young life he had given himself to Jesus, his Savior. He evidently did not belong to the great number of giddy young men and women who delay their repentance, disregard God's Word and the Sacraments, and so would be unprepared if death should suddenly claim them. At the end of the World War the world was ravaged by the mysterious disease known as the Spanish Influenza. It claimed young men and women by the thousands also in our country. But even if we are spared the ravages of an epidemic, — in the midst of life we are in death! Are we all, young and old, ready to meet our God when the summons comes? O let us follow the example of that young man in the South! Let us make Jesus our Savior from sin and death in daily personal faith. This is a faithful saying! We can stake our eternal happiness on it, for it is God's unfailing promise: Whoever believes in His dear Son shall never die. It is worthy of all acceptance! There is salvation for sinners in none other than in Jesus, *our* Jesus. So let us daily give ourselves to Him in penitent, humble faith, and we can depart this world in peace whenever it is God's will.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

When I shall launch to worlds unseen,
Oh, may I then be found in Him,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne!
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

February 27.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. *Matt. 5, 9.*

Peace! Peace! cries our restless age; but there is no peace. Whichever way we look, we see the world filled with strife, hate, war, and bloodshed. And yet there is a glorious League of Peace, founded by God Himself, which has its societies among all the nations and peoples of the inhabited globe and whose meek and gentle members make peace wherever they go. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ and now consecrate themselves and their all to the service of the Prince of Peace. They make peace between man and God. They go with, or send, the Gospel of peace into the hovels of the poor, the prisons, the busy marts, or the quiet villages of civilization. They send it into the benighted heathen countries and everywhere proclaim: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. . . . We are ambassadors for Christ and pray you in His stead, Be ye reconciled to God!" They make peace between man and man. Wherever opportunity offers, they will allay strife between quarreling brethren and bring them the blessings of concord and unity. Though for this labor of love they are criticized and maligned and mocked, they continue unwearied in their peace-making efforts; for they are the "children of God." Like father, like child. Their God and heavenly Father is a God of peace; they, His sons and daughters, cannot be otherwise. Filled with His Spirit, they approve themselves God's peacemakers in the world. How about *us*? Are we satisfied with merely keeping the "public peace," or do we, as true children of God, conduct ourselves as peacemakers in our daily surroundings? May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus; and in the power of His Holy Spirit may we approve ourselves blest peacemakers all the days of our life!

Prince of Peace, control my will;
Bid this struggling heart be still,
Bid my fears and doubtings cease,
Hush my spirit into peace.

Thou hast bought me with Thy
blood,
Opened wide the gate to God;
Peace I ask; but peace must be,
Lord, in being one with Thee.

May Thy will, not mine, be done;
May Thy will and mine be one;
Chase these doubtings from my
heart;
Now Thy perfect peace impart.

Savior, at Thy feet I fall;
Thou my Life, my God, my All!
Let Thy happy servant be
One forevermore with Thee!

February 28.

Without shedding of blood is no remission. *Heb. 9, 22.*

Infidels take great offense at the Scriptural doctrine laid down in this text. "Behold!" they cry in their hatred, "behold what a monster the God of the Bible is! He must first see the flow of blood before His wrath is satisfied. Why does He not simply *pardon* sinners if He is such a merciful God as the Bible declares?" We answer: Our God is, indeed, a merciful God, and He proved it supremely in giving His own dear Son to be a ransom for our sin. But our God is also a God of justice; and according to His justice He must punish sin, as all unbelievers will find to their terrible cost if they repent not in time. Now, the punishment for sin is death, as it is written: "The wages of sin is death." *Rom. 6, 23.* This truth was taught in the Old Testament by the shedding of the blood of the animal sacrifices. When an Israelite had sinned, he had to bring a lamb or some other perfect animal to the Temple. This lamb became his substitute, taking his place. Being the sinner's substitute, it had to bear the punishment of his sin — its blood was shed. Thus the Israelite received remission. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." All those lambs sacrificed in the Temple pointed to Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. His death, too, was vicarious, He endured it in our place. Since Christ is true *man*, His death availed for *men*, for human beings. But He is also true *God*; and therefore His death is of infinite value. By his sins man had offended the infinite justice of an infinite God. Therefore no mere man could by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him. All mere human sacrifice here would have proved insufficient. And therefore "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Since it is God's own Son who shed His blood and died for us, His death more than satisfied the justice of God. In Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. In Him we are now *legally* free from all guilt and punishment. To Him be praise and glory forevermore!

Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.

Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice
And sing His bleeding love.

February 29.

Come, Lord Jesus! *Rev. 22, 20.*

The last verse in the last book of the Bible closes with the longing prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Some day will see the end of time, when men shall no more need to add an extra day to the calendar; for then all time will have been swallowed up by eternity. Then the closing prayer of the Bible, the yearning prayer of all the saints of God of all the ages, will have been fulfilled, and Jesus will have come to judge the quick and the dead and to take His children of the Church Militant home to the Church Triumphant. He came once into our flesh to regain for us Paradise Lost. He comes daily to us in His blessed Gospel and offers us His pardoning grace for our sin, His sustaining comfort for all our sorrows, His saving help even in the hour of death. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me," that is, I will live in the most intimate union and communion with him and give him to partake of My grace and salvation. Oh, then, let us not hear Jesus' Word in a forgetful, superficial manner, as so many do, but let us open the door of our hearts to Him and His quickening Word; let us daily pray: "Come into this heart of mine, Dearest Savior, make it Thine." And when He comes, be it for Judgment Day or in sudden death, we shall be ready to meet Him and to enter into the blessed abode of heaven and join all its singing hosts of redeemed sinners. May this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all! Aye, come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Jesus comes to hearts rejoicing,
Bringing news of sins forgiven;
Jesus comes in sounds of gladness,
Leading souls redeemed to heaven:

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Now the gate of death is riven.

Jesus comes in joy and sorrow,
Shares alike our hopes and fears;
Jesus comes, whate'er befalls us,
Glads our hearts and dries our tears;

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Cheering e'en our falling years.

Jesus comes on clouds triumphant
When the heavens shall pass away;
Jesus comes again in glory,
Let us then our homage pay,

Alleluia! ever singing

Till the dawn of endless day.

March 1.

Zion shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. *Is. 1, 27.*

Our God is a God of law and order. Man, His creature, must worship and obey Him according to His divine Law or suffer the punishment for sinning. Even his redemption or release from sin and punishment must be accomplished "with judgment" and "with righteousness," in a lawful manner. "When a mob breaks into a jail and sets a criminal free, that prisoner is not a legally free man because the law still retains its claim on him. Violence is not law, but rather an overthrowing of the law. To make a transgressor legally free, the demands of the law must be complied with. Behold here the reason why God would not use His almighty power to set us captives free, because He would not set aside His own Law. He wanted our liberty, but legally, lawfully; and the Law requires a ransom. — But has not a ruler the right to pardon those under sentence of the law? Our civil constitution confers this prerogative on our chief magistrate; but he is to use this authority *lawfully*, and if he pardons without cause, he abuses his authority and becomes the patron of transgressors. Man had to be redeemed according to law, with judgment and righteousness, and could not be restored by violence or connivance." (*Kuegele.*) For this reason, then, God, in His great mercy, laid all our sins on His dear Son and made Him our ransom. Christ stood in the judgment of God for us, in our stead suffering all the penalties imposed by divine justice and thereby obtaining for us the righteousness that availeth before God. Whosoever believeth in Him shall not come into Judgment, but has passed from death unto life.

Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered His blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside,
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the Throne.

To this dear Surety's hand
Will I commit my cause;
He answers and fulfils
His Father's broken laws.
Behold my soul at freedom set;
My Surety paid the dreadful debt.

March 2.

For in that **He Himself** hath suffered, being tempted, **He is** able to succor them that are tempted. *Heb. 2, 18.*

After His baptism in Jordan our Savior was led by God's Spirit into the wilderness, there to be tempted of the devil. He did not drive the devil from Him with His almighty power, as He could have done, but suffered Satan to attack Him and overcame his assaults victoriously by means of the written Word of God. And so in all subsequent temptations He repulses Satan, until in the night in which He was betrayed He could triumphantly declare: "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." Yes, the prince of this world, Satan, who accuses us day and night on account of our sinfulness, came against our suffering Savior and endeavored to destroy Him and to prevent His great work of redemption. But all in vain. In His vicarious death on the cross our Savior gained the final, everlasting victory over the forces of darkness and "descended into hell," into the very citadel of Satan, where He proclaimed our victorious redemption from the devil's power. O glorious truth! The Seed of the Woman *has* bruised the head of the Old Serpent that betrayed our first parents and *has* atoned for their and our apostasy, or falling away from God. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Now we *are* redeemed from death and hell; and though Satan assail us again and again with his temptations to misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice, we can now victoriously withstand his assaults through faith in Him who is greater and mightier than the prince of this world, even our loving, sympathizing High Priest, the dear Savior Jesus Christ. He can and will succor us if we only fly to Him. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. His saving Word is our sure weapon of defense against ten thousand devils.

Though devils all the world should
fill,

All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

The Word they still shall let
remain

And not a thank have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife:
Let these all be gone,
They yet have nothing won;
The kingdom ours remaineth.

March 3.

And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good; but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. *Mark 14, 6—9.*

Here our Lord Jesus defends timid and silent Mary of Bethany against the unjust criticism of some of His disciples. She had anointed Him with very precious ointment, at which several of His disciples, especially the traitor Judas, had taken offense, declaring it to be an unnecessary waste, as the precious ointment might have been sold for the benefit of the poor. But the Lord defends her act as an act of personal love, done in self-sacrificing devotion to Him. The ointment which Mary had used was "the costliest oil of antiquity, the pure spikenard, drawn from an Indian plant and exposed in flasks of alabaster for sale throughout the Roman Empire, where it fetched a price that put it beyond the reach of any but the very rich." Among all present there at Bethany, Mary was the only one who had grasped in personal faith the words of Jesus concerning His approaching death. Even His disciples "understood none of those things, and they were hid from them." Mary, however, who had sat at Jesus' feet, had grasped the "mystery of the Cross" revealed by His blessed lips; and so it was above all an act of faith when she anointed her Lord. Hence her memory shall not perish as long as the Gospel is preached in the world. Her act of loving and devoted faith shall be held up to all men as an example for them to follow. Let us not forget it. We no longer have the Savior visibly with us, but we can serve Him in His poor, suffering brethren; and here we are not to be stingy, but, like Mary, give the best we have and can give. Above all, let us sit at His feet in this holy time of Lent and deepen our faith and love through the story of His saving Passion and death.

Jesus, I will ponder now
On Thy holy Passion;
With Thy Spirit me endow
For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith
May the image cherish
Of Thy suffering, pain, and death,
That I might not perish.

Grant that I Thy Passion view
With repentant grieving,
Nor Thee crucify anew
By unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun
Every sinful pleasure
Since for me God's only Son
Suffered without measure?

March 4.

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He was come from God and went to God, He riseth from supper and laid aside His garments and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. *John 13, 3—5.*

It was in the guest-chamber at Jerusalem, where He was eating the last Passover-meal with His disciples, that Jesus performed this lowest and meanest service of a slave and washed the feet of His followers. Ah, He was soon to humble Himself even deeper before their eyes and die as a condemned slave and criminal on the cross that He might wash them and all men clean from the damning stain of sin and guilt. Oh, how our blessed Lord puts to shame our pride and self-esteem with this act of lowly service! He tells His disciples and us why He performed it. After He had washed their feet, He said to His disciples: "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Oh, how little we follow this example of our Lord! May He forgive us our many acts of unkindness and through His Holy Spirit teach us to crucify our Old Adam of selfishness and pride and to serve each other more in love!

O blessed Jesus, when I see Thee bending
Girt as a servant, at Thy servants' feet,
Love, lowliness, and might, in zeal all blending
To wash their dust away and make them meet
To share Thy feast, I know not to adore
Whether Thy humbleness or glory more.

Meek Jesus! to my soul Thy Spirit lending,
Teach me to live, like Thee, in lowly love;
With humblest service all Thy saints befriending
Until I serve before Thy throne above —
Yes, serving e'en my foes, as Thou didst seek
The feet of Judas in Thy service meek.

Daily my pilgrim feet, as homeward wending
My weary way, are sadly stained with sin;
Daily do Thou, Thy precious grace expending,
Wash me all clean without and clean within
And make me fit to have a part with Thee
And Thine, at last, in heaven's festivity.

March 5.

What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. *John 13, 7.*

Peter could not understand why the Lord wanted to wash His disciples' feet. It passed his comprehension. So he burst out with the protest: "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" But the Lord answers him with the words: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." And the Lord did explain the reason for His incomprehensible action afterwards, and Peter learned a lesson he never forgot in his life. How often does the Lord do things in our lives that we cannot understand! His providences with us are often riddles we cannot solve. Often they touch our very heartstrings and fill our eyes with tears and our lips with wailing anguish. Who can understand why his dear ones are taken from him by death, often in the very prime of life? Who can understand why the Lord lays him low on a couch of pain and sickness when he would like to do so much good to his family and friends? Who can understand "steam-boat disasters, railroad wrecks, the ravages of war, and all the cruelties, and oppressions, and persecutions, and wrongs of every kind which give a lurid light to all history, so that it is hard to believe in the perfect goodness of God"? But is there not comfort, great divine comfort, in the fact that all these incomprehensible dispensations come from Him who loved us unto death, and that they can never mean our harm, but are sent only for our temporal and eternal happiness? Though far above our sight, they are always done in love by Him who has numbered the very hairs of our head and says: "Thou shalt know hereafter." Blessed "hereafter"! Let us patiently and prayerfully wait for it.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take:
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

March 6.

And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you. *Luke 22, 19. 20.*

While eating the Passover-meal with His disciples, the Savior takes of the bread and wine and, blessing them, gives them to His disciples with the plain words: "This is My body; this is My blood. This do in remembrance of Me." He calls it the *new testament*. So the old testament, or covenant, with its types and symbols and burdensome rites and laws, is abolished. We are now living in the times of the New Testament, in which we have Christ Himself and all the rich treasures of His saving grace which He won for us in His vicarious sufferings and death. Mistaken minds have altered the words of His testament, some calling it a mere symbol, in which we receive nothing but bread and wine. Others declare that their priests can change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ and thus offer up Christ anew for the sins of the living and the dead. But that is a blasphemous abuse of the Lord's testament; for Scripture expressly declares, Heb. 9, 12: "By His own blood He entered in *once* into the Holy Place, having obtained *eternal* redemption for us." Relying on Christ's sacred Word, we believe that we receive with the bread that we *eat* and the wine that we *drink* in the Lord's Supper His body and blood in an inexplicable, heavenly manner. Only then do we receive this Holy Supper worthily when we humbly believe the plain words of Christ and come to the Sacrament in "remembrance" of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why we should remember the Lord's death Luther tells us in his *Christian Questions*, saying: "That we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins but Christ, true God and man; and that we may learn to look with terror at our sins and to regard them as great indeed and to find joy and comfort in Him alone, and thus be saved through such faith." And why I should wish to go to the Sacrament, Luther again tells us so touchingly: "That I may learn to believe that Christ died for my sin out of great love, as before said; and that I may also learn of Him to love God and my neighbor." — When did we partake of the Lord's Supper last?

Lord Jesus, make us ever worthy guests at Thy table of grace. Amen.

March 7.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. *Luke 22, 31. 32.*

What a kind and gracious Savior the Lord here shows Himself to Simon Peter! He warns His weak and impulsive disciple against Satan's coming temptation. He sees how helpless Peter, through his own fault, will prove under the temptation, but He does not for that reason cast him aside. Though Peter prove faithless to Him, He in His great mercy will prove faithful to the fallen sinner and bring him back to His fold. He therefore tells Peter: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." And it was this promise of forgiving and abiding mercy given by his Lord that saved penitent Peter, saved him from despairing as Judas did, when he went out from the courtyard of the high priest to weep so bitterly over his base and sad denial of his Lord. Ever afterwards Peter faithfully confessed Him and strengthened his brethren, as we see from his glorious epistles. Peter's Savior is our Savior. He knows our fickle hearts better than we do. He would save us from falling from grace and losing the crown of everlasting life. He therefore warns us so lovingly in His holy Word against all false doctrine, all dangerous companionship with the unbelieving world, all manner of sin. But, alas! in our sinful weakness we so often given way to temptation and, like Peter, fall into grievous disobedience and sin. Oh, if our merciful Savior did not take compassion on us and intercede for us as He did for Peter, not one of us would come to saving repentance and be able to rise from his fall. It is owing to the faithful Lord and Savior alone, then, that our faith does not fail and that we can come back to Him with the plea for mercy and be heard.

Lord, I have sinned, but pardon me
The faults for which I grieve;
In mercy to Thy tender arms
Thy sinning child receive.

The wrong that, unashamed, I did,
May I with shame confess,
Nor seek to shield myself from blame,
Nor make my fault seem less.

Then o'er my sinful soul do Thou
Thy precious blood outpour
And let Thy lips forgiveness speak
And bid me "sin no more."

March 8.

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with Me. *Matt. 26, 36—38.*

“Draw near, my heart, and gaze anew, Where Jesus on that night withdrew To bear the load for thee; Come, read the love that in Him wrought, Come, linger long in tender thought, In dark Gethsemane.” Who can forget Gethsemane, the sacred garden with its olive-trees at the foot of Mount Olivet, where our Savior in great agony of soul, knowing and dreading the awful ordeal awaiting Him, wrestled with His God and Father in prayer? Three times He falls to the ground and pleads: “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!” The Lord, our God, had laid on Him, His guiltless Son, the iniquity of us all. He now tastes the bitterness of death for us all; for “the wages of sin is death,” not only temporal death, but eternal death, where the immortal soul, forever separated from God, its Maker, dwells in the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. He drinks the cup of God’s holy wrath to the very last dregs and, for a time, suffers the agony of the damned in hell. But thus He redeemed us from the pain and woe of the damned and saved us from the wrath to come. Jesus, bereft of all consolation, now becomes our Joy and Consolation through all eternity. “Gethsemane, thy name is graved Deep on the hearts of all the saved And cannot be erased; For till eternity shall end, Oh, who in full can comprehend The scene in thee embraced?”

See where thy Lord in awful test
Obeyed the Father’s high behest
Submissively for thee;
Oh, think what torture He
endured,
And what of bliss for thee secured
In dark Gethsemane!

And when harassed by many
a doubt,
And darkness gathers thick about
Without a cheering ray,
Then to Gethsemane repair,
And listen to the Savior’s prayer,
And learn of Him to pray.

But till life’s service be resigned,
Shall ever sacred be enshrined
That scene of agony;
Let tears its clustered memories start,
But never, O my wayward heart,
Forget Gethsemane!

March 9.

And He cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak. *Matt. 26, 40. 41.*

Our agonizing Savior must tread the wine-press of God's wrath alone; and of the people there was none with Him. *Is. 63, 3.* In great fear and dread He comes to His disciples, hoping for a word of comfort; but their lips are mute; He finds His friends asleep. We see how our salvation is founded alone on the merit of Christ. No saint with his prayer or merit can help us. But what a sad picture these sleeping disciples present! When they ought to be watching and praying with their Lord to gather strength and comfort for the rapidly approaching fatal hour when Satan would sift them as wheat, they give way to drowsiness and fall asleep! Oh, if their Lord had not watched and prayed for them, they all would have perished in the temptation that soon came upon them. But do we not see in these sleeping disciples our own portrait? Do we always go watching and praying through this life, beset, as it is, with countless temptations coming from the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh? Oh, that we might all take to heart the loving warning of our Lord: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak"! Oh, that we might learn anew from our watching and praying Savior to watch more anxiously over our wayward hearts that we enter not willingly or presumptuously into any kind of temptation; and when temptation comes to us, that we may more earnestly pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but help us, Thou merciful Savior, from this evil hour!"

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray,
From thy sleep awake thee,
Lest at last the evil day
Suddenly o'ertake thee;
For the Foe, Well we know,
Oft his harvest reapeth
While the Christian sleepeth.

But first rouse thee and awake
From secure indifference;
Else will follow in its wake
Woe without deliverance.
O beware! Soul, take care!
Death in sins might find thee,
Ere thou look behind thee.

But while watching, also see
That thou pray unceasing,
For the Lord must make thee free,
Strength and faith increasing,
So to do Service true;
Let not sloth enslave thee;
Pray, and He will save thee.

March 10.

And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude, with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master! and kissed Him. And Jesus said to him: Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. *Matt. 26, 47—50.*

Every incident connected with our Lord's Passion stands foretold in Old Testament prophecy. This is true also of His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver. (See Zech. 11, 12, 13.) But our hearts sink with horror when we see that one of the Twelve, one of the chosen and highly favored apostles, Judas, betrays his pure and holy Master for the purchasing price of a slave, betrays Him into the hands of His enemies by the sign and seal of friendship — a kiss! Oh, to what appalling depths of iniquity human nature can fall! What turned Judas into such a heartless hypocrite and betrayer of his Master? *It was the love of money.* Little by little his desire for gain grew upon him until it won its fatal mastery over him. So it is with every pet sin a person indulges. Little by little it twines its deadly coils about him until it crushes him in its cruel embrace, like a poisonous, monstrous snake. We know the terrible end of Judas, how he died, in frightful remorse, at his own hands. This is written for our warning. And yet the root of all evil, the sinful love of money, is the dominant vice in Christendom. How many, alas, indulge it under the specious plea of thrift, economy, laying up a penny for a rainy day, and so forth! Meanwhile the love of money drives from their hearts all love of God and man; all pleadings and warnings of their Savior are in vain, and they finally perish in despair, as did Judas. Let us beseech our Lord to shield us by His Holy Spirit from Judas' vile sin and terrible doom.

O meek Redeemer, dost Thou move
To meet the traitor and reprove
That execrable kiss?
Yielding Thyself for sinful man,
Whose life on earth is but a span —
Was ever love like this?

Alas for me! the guilt is mine
Whene'er against Thy will benign
My treacherous heart hath stood;
Mine are the lips that have betrayed,
Mine is the debt which must be paid
With groans and tears and blood.

March 11.

Then asked He them again, "Whom seek ye?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He; if, therefore, ye seek Me, let these go their way"; that the saying might be fulfilled which He spake, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." *John 18, 7—9.*

Though invincible angel legions stood ready to prevent His capture and arrest, our suffering Lord would not call them to His rescue. Neither would He be defended by the sword. "Put up again thy sword into his place," He said to Simon Peter; "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." He and His saving cause win their way to victory, not by carnal weapons, but alone by the message of His redeeming love, proclaimed in His soul-converting Gospel. He is come to save the world through His atoning sacrifice on the cross. Willingly He therefore now gives Himself into the hands of His captors. But the divine power, which He would not use for His own defense, He now employs for the safe-conduct of His weak and fearing disciples. "If ye seek Me, let these go their way," He commands, and with this word of divine power compels His captors to let His disciples escape unharmed. What a mighty Savior we have in our dear Lord Jesus Christ! If He could thus save His followers while He was in the humble form of a servant here on earth, how much more will He be able to save them now while sitting at the right hand of God, clothed with everlasting majesty and glory! How mightily has He not defended and saved His little flock of believers, His Church, through all the stormy centuries! How wonderfully did He not protect and guard Luther and His other Gospel-witnesses during the Reformation against all the wiles and persecutions of popes and emperors! So is He still to-day able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him. Let us give ourselves and the cause of His Gospel confidently into His omnipotent hands. We have His glorious promise: "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." *John 10, 28.*

Jesus, priceless Treasure,
Source of purest pleasure,
Truest Friend to me!
Long my heart hath panted,
Till it well-nigh fainted,
Thirsting after Thee!
Thine I am, O spotless Lamb!
I will suffer naught to hide Thee,
Ask for naught beside Thee.

In Thine arm I rest me,
Foes who would molest me
Cannot reach me here;
Though the earth be shaking,
Every heart be quaking,
Jesus calms my fear;
Sin and hell, in conflict fell,
With their heaviest storms assail me,
Jesus will not fail me.

March 12.

And the high priest answered and said unto Him: "I adjure thee by the living God that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus saith unto him: "Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." *Matt. 26, 63. 64.*

The captors of Jesus first led Him bound to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest of that year, who had been plotting the Savior's death ever since the resurrection of Lazarus. John 11, 49. 50. Before this biased and cruel judge our Lord was brought from Annas, where his trial at once took place. When, however, our Lord remains silent to all the lying testimony which the hastily collected, false, and suborned witnesses adduce against Him, Caiaphas springs his trap and solemnly adjures the Lord to tell them whether He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, or not. Now, where the honor of His heavenly Father, the truth of His Gospel, the salvation of the lost sinful world is involved, our blessed Lord does not hesitate a moment, but at once confesses the truth, though He knows what terrible sufferings and death await Him. In His great love He would even save His cruel, unjust judges, and therefore He warns them against the coming judgment. He came in judgment on them in the destruction of their city, Jerusalem; He will come to their final and eternal Judgment when He appears in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead. Woe unto all, then, who rejected Him, their only Savior, in blind and obdurate hate and unbelief! He that believeth not shall be damned; he excludes himself from the mercy, the righteousness, the salvation prepared also for him in Christ Jesus, the sinners' Friend and pardoning Judge; and so he must suffer the curse and die in his sins without mercy through all eternity. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

Great God, to Thee my spirit clings,
Thy boundless love declaring;
One wondrous sight my comfort brings,
The Judge my nature wearing.
Beneath His cross I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away
And thus prepare to meet Him.

March 13.

And after a while came unto him they that stood by and said to Peter, "Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee." Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not the man." And immediately the cock crew.

Matt. 26, 73. 74.

Though not premeditated, like Judas's betrayal, Peter's base and cowardly denial of our Lord is in no way excusable. What business has he there in the courtyard of the high priest among the sneering and mocking enemies of his Master? And had he not been warned faithfully and repeatedly against the very sin he was now committing? Why had he not hearkened to, and obeyed, his faithful Master's caution to watch and pray against this temptation? But it is ever thus: Pride goeth before a fall. In his pride, Peter would not acknowledge that he could ever deny his Master. He trusted in himself, in his good intentions, in his deceitful and wicked heart, and terribly came to grief. For a lying and deceitful tongue is ever an abomination to the holy and truthful God, and our Savior declares: "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." Alas! there are very few of the Lord's followers who have never denied Him, be it only by being conformed to the unbelieving world or by having kept silent when they ought to have confessed their faith. We can find pardon for this grievous sin only in the cleansing blood of Jesus. But the only safe course to follow against future lapses is to stay away from all dangerous resorts of the wicked world, from all lodge-halls, dance-halls, and gambling-dens. Let us zealously avoid all intimate intercourse with the unbelieving enemies of our Lord and *do* according to His Word: "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6, 17. 18.

My soul, be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise,
And hosts of sin are pressing
 hard
To draw thee from the skies.

O watch and fight and pray,
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every
 day
And help divine implore.

Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor lay thine armor down;
Thine arduous work will not
 be done
Till thou receive thy crown.

Fight on, my soul, till death
Shall bring thee to thy God;
He'll take thee at thy parting
 breath
To His divine abode.

March 14.

And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice." And Peter went out and wept bitterly. *Luke 22, 61. 62.*

"Peter, is it true? Thou dost not know Me, Me, with whom thou hast been for three long years, seeing My mighty works and hearing My saving Gospel; Me, of whom thou didst confess in the fulness of thy grateful heart: 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God'? What, O Peter, if it were true? If thou didst not know Me and I did not know thee, but should deny thee before My heavenly Father, even as thou hast now denied Me?" All this and much more lay in the look of reproachful love which our bound and captive Master gave His denying disciple. But it was also a look of pitying and merciful love that He gave him when He turned to look on Peter. "O Peter," that look declared, "did I not warn thee? But thou wouldst not listen. Thou hast denied Me, but I will not deny thee. My silence now atones for thy wicked denial and blasphemy. I now go to suffer and die for thy great sin and to save thee from its damning guilt and punishment. I will forgive and forget. Come back to Me. I will not cast thee out." It was this love, this ever-adorable love of His pitying and forgiving Master, that brought Simon Peter to his senses, made him remember his Savior's warning, and caused his penitent tears to flow. In faith he lays hold of his Savior's pardon, and that saves him from despair in his bitter repentance. But ever afterward, it is said, when Peter heard a crowing cock, the tears would start to his eyes, and he would remember his great sin. His repentance was *lifelong*, and that is the only true repentance. If we have sinned with Peter, let us repent with him. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord, thy God." *Jer. 3, 12.*

Out of the deep I call
To Thee, O Lord, to Thee;
Before Thy throne of grace I fall;
Be merciful to me!

Lord, there is mercy now,
As ever was, with Thee;
Before Thy throne of grace I bow;
Be merciful to me!

March 15.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" They answered and said, "He is guilty of death." Then did they spit in His face and buffeted Him, and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?" *Matt. 26, 65—68.*

Pretending profound horror at the supposed blasphemy of Christ, the cowardly high priest and elders of the Jews vent their long-harbored hate and spite against their helpless Prisoner by inflicting all manner of brutal indignities upon Him. We wonder that the earth did not open its mouth and swallow these mockers and blasphemers of God's holy Son. Num. 16. But this was their hour and the power of darkness, and all was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Do we not hear and see the lament of Isaiah (53, 3) fulfilled before our very eyes: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not"; and: "I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (Is. 50, 6)? But what these wicked maligners of our blessed Lord intended for evil, God in His wonderful mercy meant unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Jesus should die for the nation of the Jews; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. John 11, 52. It is not a mere man whom the Jewish council here condemns to death, but God's own Son, made manifest in the flesh. Therefore Paul can exult: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." 2 Cor. 5, 19. Ever since, we can exult with him: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 31. 32. Whoever now believes in this despised and condemned Jesus shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life. John 5, 24.

Thou, ah! Thou hast taken on Thee
Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee,
O Thou sinless Son of God!
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver
From the bonds of sin forever.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee!

March 16.

Pilate said unto Him: "Art Thou a king, then?" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." Pilate saith unto Him: "What is truth?" *John 18, 37. 38.*

Because the high priest and the elders of the Jews no longer held the power to execute a condemned prisoner, they dragged our Lord in the early dawn of Good Friday morning before the judgment-hall and demanded of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, that he put the hated Jesus to death. Asked for the reason, they falsely accused the Savior of having forbidden to give tribute to Caesar and of setting Himself up as a king. Questioned by Pilate about the charge, the Lord told His heathen judge that He was truly a king, not, however, a king of this world, but the God-ordained King of Truth, the truth that saves men's souls. But what does Pilate answer? He sneeringly asks the question ever asked by all confirmed skeptics and infidels: "What is truth?" These agnostics act as if they could not know the Truth! And yet it is proclaimed from the housetops in these glad, rich Gospel-days. Listen, ye doubters: This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, came into the world to save sinners, to save *you*. Listen again: If any man will do His will, — namely, repent of his sins and believe in Christ as his Savior, Acts 17, 30. 31, — he shall *know* of the doctrine whether it be of God. John 7, 17. Who has never eaten honey knows nothing of its sweetness. Who will not do the will of God and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, will never know and experience the surpassing sweetness of Christ's saving Truth in his heart or in his life or on his deathbed. Poor doubters!

O Jesus, King of Glory!
Both David's Lord and Son!
Thy realm endures forever,
In heaven is fixed Thy throne;
Help, that in earth's dominions,
Throughout from pole to pole,
Thy realm may spread salvation
To each benighted soul.

Ah, look on me with pity,
Though I am weak and poor;
Admit me to Thy kingdom,
To dwell there, blest and sure,
I pray Thee, keep and guide me
Safe from my bitter foes,
From sin and death and Satan;
Free me from all my woes.

March 17.

And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see Him of a long season because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. *Luke 23, 8—11.*

Pilate had found Jesus innocent and somehow became deeply impressed by the mysterious personality of the Prisoner before him. He tries to shift the responsibility in the matter to others, and hearing that Jesus is from Galilee, he sends Him under a strong guard to King Herod, who had come down from Galilee for the Passover at Jerusalem. This wicked king was given the jurisdiction over Galilee by the Romans. He was a lewd adulterer and the wanton murderer of John the Baptist, as we read Matt. 14. He was glad when Jesus was brought before him; for he held our blessed Lord to be nothing else but a cunning magician, who had won great renown by his mastery in the black art. Our Lord, however, performs no miracle before him, nor does He answer any of the wicked king's many questions; and so by His own example He upholds the rule laid down for us, Matt. 7, 6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you." This wretched king and his men of war, exasperated at the dignified silence of the Lord, vent their spite against Him by mocking and taunting Him and finally dress Him in a gorgeous white robe, the royal garb of the Jewish kings, and send Him back to Pilate. So our weary and mistreated Savior is dragged without mercy from one unjust tribunal to the other, first before Annas, then Caiaphas, then Pilate, then Herod, and now back again to Pilate. But the robe of mockery He now wears is significant. We see in it an emblem of the white robe of divine righteousness which He has won for us sinners by His patient, vicarious sufferings and death.

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of death I rise
To claim my mansion in the skies,
E'en then this shall be all my plea,
"Jesus hath lived and died for me."

March 18.

And they cried out all at once, saying, "Away with this Man and release unto us Barabbas!" (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison). *Luke 23, 18, 19.*

Pilate tries in vain to get rid of the matter with Christ. The Scriptures have to be fulfilled. Christ, the Savior, comes into the life of every man, who must now decide for or against Him and thus reveal the secret thoughts of his heart. *Luke 2, 34, 35.* After Herod's refusal to decide the case with Christ, Pilate hits upon another scheme. Recalling the custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover Feast, he asks the Jews whether he should release the notorious criminal Barabbas to them or the innocent Christ. But they all with one accord demand the release of Barabbas and reject Christ. What shameful ingratitude! For as Pilate rightly asks them, What evil hath He — Christ — done? But behind these blind and infuriate Jews stands our God with His wonderful plan for our redemption. In His eyes Barabbas represents rebellious mankind, which has deserved prison and death for its sedition against Him and His holy Law. But in guilty mankind's stead Jesus, His innocent Son, is condemned, and Barabbas — is set free. Let us imagine ourselves in prison in the place of Barabbas, loaded with guilt and dreading to be led forth to our execution in the coming dawn. Then let us read the impressive lines of Hezekiah Butterworth: —

Barabbas in his prison cell
Gazed on the heavens fair
And saw the paschal moon ascend
In night's empurpled air.
The hours crept on; with awe and dread
He waited for the morn;
He heard at last the soldier's tread
And saw the bolt withdrawn.

"Barabbas," so the soldier spake,
"I bring thee news of grace,
For Christ, the Man of Nazareth,
To-day shall take thy place.
Without the gate shall Jesus bear
The cross prepared for thee;
Go thou to the atoning feast!" —
The man of crime went free.

Barabbas saw the darkened earth
When came the hour of noon,
And slept in peace when Jesus wept
Beneath the paschal moon.
O man of sin, in thee I see
Myself redeemed by grace;
The blood-stained cross that rose for thee
Took every sinner's place.

March 19.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they smote Him with their hands. Pilate, therefore, went forth again and saith unto them, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, "Behold the Man!"

John 19, 1—5.

O bleeding Head, and wounded,
And full of pain and scorn,
In mockery surrounded
With cruel crown of thorn!
O Head! once crowned with
glory

And heavenly majesty,
But now despised and gory;
Yet here I welcome Thee!

Men spit upon and jeer Thee,
Thou noble countenance,
Though mighty worlds shall fear
Thee

And flee before Thy glance!
How art Thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does Thy visage languish,
Which once was bright as morn!

Now from Thy cheeks has
vanished
Their color once so fair;
From Thy red lips is banished
The splendor that was there.
Pale Death with cruel rigor
Bereaveth Thee of life;
Thus lovest Thou Thy vigor
And strength in this sad strife.

My burden, in Thy Passion,
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression
Which brought this woe on
Thee.

I cast me down before Thee,
Wrath were my rightful lot;
Have mercy, I implore Thee,
Redeemer, spurn me not!

My Shepherd, now receive me!
My Guardian, own me Thine!
Great blessings Thou didst
give me,

O Source of gifts divine!
Thy lips have often fed me
With milk and sweetest food;
Thy Spirit oft has led me
To stores of heavenly good.

Here I will stand beside Thee,
From Thee I will not part;
O Savior, do not chide me!
When breaks Thy loving
heart,

When soul and body languish
In death's last fatal grasp,
Then, in Thy deepest anguish,
Thee in my arms I'll clasp.

March 20.

Pilate saith unto them, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus, which is called Christ?" *Matt. 27, 22.*

Pilate does not know what to do with Jesus, his prisoner. He ought to have known, and in his inmost heart he did know. The path of duty lay plain and clear before him. He knew that Jesus was innocent, that the Jews had delivered Him into his hands and demanded Jesus' death from envy. *Matt. 27, 18.* So it was his sacred duty to set Jesus free. But Pilate was a politician, who curried favor with the elders of the Jews and was afraid to anger them by releasing Jesus. He finally gives way to their insistent clamor and sentences Jesus to be crucified and so commits judicial murder. — "What shall I do with Jesus?" Alas! so many raise that question of Pilate in our time. So many do not know what to do with Jesus. Many, even so-called ministers of the Gospel, who ought to know better, hold Him to be a mere man, a great teacher of human love and social reform, who died a martyr's death on the cross. But they contradict themselves. They all regard Him as a good and pious man, in fact, as the highest type of human goodness and morality. But no good, moral man will die with a lie, even a false oath, on his lips. Jesus, put under oath by the high priest Caiaphas, declares that He is *the Christ, the Son of the living God*. What will these unbelieving critics do with this sacred oath of Christ concerning Himself? God in His holy Word tells all men what they should do with Christ. He has made Christ our *Wisdom*, from whom we should learn divine, saving Truth; our *Righteousness*, in whom alone we can find forgiveness for our sins; our *Sanctification*, in whom alone we can stand holy and blameless in the sight of God; our *Redemption*, in whom alone we find salvation from death and the wrath to come, and gain eternal life. *1 Cor. 1, 30.* Only when we, by faith, make Christ all this to us, is He in fact our *Savior*.

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me.
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the cross the radiance streaming
Adds new luster to the day.

March 21.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Then answered all the people and said, "His blood be on us and on our children!" *Matt. 27, 24. 25.*

In vain Pilate goes through the farce of washing his hands clean from the murder of the innocent Jesus. All the water in the ocean cannot wash the bloody guilt from his hands or his soul. God avenges the blood of His innocent Son on the cowardly and guilty judge. A few years later Pilate is deposed from office and cited to Rome to give an account of his many illegal acts while governor of Palestine. In his guilty fear he plunges into his own sword and dies by his own hands. And to this day there rests on the Jews the awful curse which their fathers brought down on themselves and on their posterity when they cried in their blind hate: "Christ's blood be on us and on our children!" But let us never forget that the blood of Christ which they spilled speaketh better things than Abel's blood. Abel's blood cried to God for vengeance; Christ's innocent and divine blood pleads for mercy also for His murderers and enemies. Then let us also pray for the conversion of the Jews and support our Gospel-mission among them. The apostles were Jews, and many a gifted teacher of Christ's saving Truth has come to the Church from this despised and hated race. But above all let us make the blood of Christ, the Son of God, our only hope in life and death in sincere, humble, and grateful faith. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Eph. 1, 7. By His blood are we redeemed from "the pit wherein is no water," Zech. 9, 11, and gain admittance among heaven's singing hosts. For they that are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Rev. 7, 14.

Glory be to Jesus,
Who, in bitter pains,
Poured for me the life-blood
From His sacred veins!

Grace and life eternal
In that blood I find;
Blest be His compassion,
Infinitely kind!

Blest through endless ages
Be the precious stream
Which from endless torments
Did the world redeem!

Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries.

March 22.

Then delivered he [Pilate] Him unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha. *John 19, 16. 17.*

“Let us also go that we may die with Him,” Thomas exclaimed when his Master turned His face toward Jerusalem there to suffer and die. “Let us also go that we may die with Him!” Must we not make these words of Thomas ours as we see our bleeding, suffering Lord going forth to His death, bearing His cross? Do not our hearts melt with sorrowing love and gratitude at the touching sight? He bears His cross, bears it willingly, uncomplainingly, in loving obedience to His heavenly Father’s will, bears with it all sin and guilt, the sin and guilt of all the sons of Adam! Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. *Is. 53, 7.*

I see my Lord, the Pure, the Meek, the Lowly,
Along the mournful way in sadness tread;
The thorns are on His brow, and He, the Holy,
Bearing His cross, to Calvary is lead.

Silent He moveth on, all uncomplaining,
Though wearily His grief and burden press;
And foes—nor shame nor pity now restraining—
With scoff and jeering mock His deep distress.

’Tis hell’s dark hour; yet calm Himself resigning,
E’en as a lamb that goeth to be slain,
The wine-press lone He treadeth unrepining,
And falling blood-drops all His raiment stain.

In mortal weakness ’neath His burden sinking,
The Son of God accepts a mortal’s aid!
Then passes on to Golgotha unshrinking,
Where love’s divinest sacrifice is made.

Dear Lord, what though my path be set with sorrow,
And oft beneath some heavy cross I groan?
My soul, weighed down, shall strength and courage borrow
At thoughts of deeper grief which Thou hast known.

And I, in tears, will yet look up in gladness
And hope, when troubles most my soul would drown;
The mournful way which Thou didst tread in sadness
Was but Thy way to glory and Thy crown.

March 23.

And there followed Him a great company of people and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. . . . For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

Luke 23, 27. 28. 31.

The pitying tears these sympathizing women weep at the sight of the stricken and condemned Jesus do them all honor, but are wept in vain. Our Savior in His great suffering is a green tree, that is, He is innocent of any crime; He has done nothing to merit death, but suffers for the guilt of others. However, if God's avenging wrath provoked by sin can kindle so fiercely against His holy and innocent Son, how much more will the fires of His wrath burn against, and consume, the dry trees, that is, the impenitent sinners, who tread under foot all the offerings of His saving grace and bring forth no fruit meet for repentance! Such a dry tree was impenitent and stiff-necked Jerusalem. The fires of divine wrath were kindling against it and would soon utterly destroy it. Forgetting His own excruciating suffering, our loving Savior warns the weeping women against the fearful fate awaiting them and their children; they should not weep for Him, but rather weep tears of repentance for themselves and their children and thus escape the wrath to come. Weeping a few sentimental tears, experiencing, for the time, sympathetic and sorrowful emotions while hearing or reading the story of our Savior's Passion, will bring us no true and lasting blessing. Jesus died for our sins. All His fearful sufferings were necessary to pay for our *personal* guilt before the just and holy God. Therefore we are to regard our sins as great indeed and to repent of them with contrite hearts and make the Savior's atoning blood our only plea for mercy at the bar of divine justice. If we do that, we shall with the help of God's Holy Spirit also bring forth fruit meet for repentance and escape the wrath to come. Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of salvation.

Savior, when in dust to Thee
Low we bow th' adoring knee,
When, repentant, to the skies
Scarce we lift our weeping eyes,
Oh, by all Thy pains and woe
Suffered once for man below,
Bending from Thy throne on high,
Hear our solemn litany!

By Thine hour of dire despair,
By Thine agony of prayer,
By the cross, the nail, the thorn,
Piercing spear, and torturing scorn;
By the gloom that veiled the skies
O'er the dreadful sacrifice:
Listen to our humble cry,
Hear our solemn litany!

March 24.

And with Him they crucify two thieves, the one on His right hand and the other on His left. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.

Mark 15, 27. 28.

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ by man rejected;
Yes, my soul, 'tis He! 'tis He!
'Tis the long-expected Prophet,
David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
'Tis the true and faithful Word.

Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that Justice gave.

Ye who think of sin but lightly,
Nor suppose the evil great,
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the Sacrifice appointed!
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.

O my crucified Redeemer, art Thou now looking at me from the altar of Thy blood-stained cross and saying to me with Thy dying breath and paling lips: "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake and will not remember thy sins"? Even so! With trembling, contrite, stricken heart I must confess: "I many times transgressing, In number far surpassing The sand upon the coast, I thus the cause have given That Thou with grief art riven And with afflictions' scourging host." O Thou atoning, loving, dying Lord and Savior, draw me now to Thee, according to Thy promise: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me." John 12, 32. Give me to embrace Thee and Thy all-sufficient sacrifice with arms of contrite and enduring faith. Nail me with Thee to Thy cross that I may ever crucify my sinful flesh and the lusts thereof and live alone unto Thee, who thus didst love me unto death, even the death upon the shameful, bitter cross.

March 25.

Then said Jesus, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." *Luke 23, 34.*

Who can measure the fathomless depths of the pardoning love which our crucified Redeemer reveals in this His first word on the cross? Instead of calling down God's just and terrifying wrath on His murderers, He pleads for them with His heavenly Father for mercy. Amazing pity, love unknown, and grace beyond degree! But did the Jews not know what they were doing when they crucified their Savior? No, not to the full limit, else had they not crucified the Prince of Life. Acts 3, 17. But yet they were not without excuse; for they should have known, seeing that they had the prophets of old and Jesus Himself to instruct them. It is therefore wonderful, incomprehensible love and mercy that the Savior here asks God to forgive them their blood-red guilt. But was not that the purpose of His coming into the world, of His lowly life, His vicarious sufferings and death, that He might obtain forgiveness of sins for all His brethren after the flesh? Oh, how dearly it cost Him! But let us ask ourselves: Do we always know what we are doing when we commit some sin? Do we then realize and remember that it cost our Savior His unutterable agony on the cross to gain for us forgiveness for *that* sin and misdeed? Because He also pleads for us, God still spares us and forgives us our sins. But, oh, that the love, the wonderful love which our crucified and pleading Savior has shown us and daily shows us, might constrain us all to avoid more zealously every thought of sin and to glorify Him daily in our body and in our spirit, which He has bought with such a price! 1 Cor. 6, 20.

Jesus, the Crucified, pleads for me
While He is nailed to the shameful tree.
Scorned and forsaken, derided and curst,
See how His enemies do their worst!
Yet in the midst of the torture and shame
Jesus, the Crucified, breathes my name!
Wonder of wonders, oh! how can it be?
Jesus, the Crucified, pleads for me!

Lord, I have left Thee, I have denied,
Followed the world in my selfish pride;
Lord, I have joined in the hateful cry:
Slay Him, away with Him, crucify!
Lord, I have done it, oh! ask me not how;
Woven the thorns for Thy tortured brow!
Yet in His pity, so boundless and free,
Jesus, the Crucified, pleads for me!

March 26.

And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.** This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, "Write not, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." *John 19, 19—22.*

The Jews feel the implied scornful charge in the title which Pilate affixed to the cross of our Savior. They ask the governor to change the writing; but he curtly replies: "What I have written I have written." God in heaven Himself guided Pilate's hand when he wrote that title; and He has seen to it that the blessed message it contains has not perished from the earth. It was written in letters of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the three most important languages of the then civilized world. Hebrew was the language of the Old Testament, the language of the true religion. Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, is the Alpha and Omega of our holy religion. In Him we have the covenant of saving grace which Almighty God made with us children of sin and death. Greek was the language of science and art. All true science and art must tend to glorify Jesus, the Son of God, made manifest in the flesh. Latin was the language of the state. No state, no political commonwealth, can survive which opposes or suppresses Jesus of Nazareth and His saving Gospel. Napoleon, while in captivity on St. Helena, speaking of the Savior, declared: "Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creation of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire on love, and to this day millions would die for Him." The thrones and empires of earthly kings all pass away. Jesus, the King of the Jews, the King of kings and Lord of lords, shall reign forevermore.

O Jesus, we adore Thee,
Upon the cross, our King;
We bow our hearts before Thee;
Thy gracious name we sing:
That name hath brought salvation,
That name, in life our stay;
Our peace, our consolation,
When life shall fade away.

Ah, Lord, our sins arraigned Thee
And nailed Thee to the tree;
Our pride, O Lord, disdained Thee;
Yet deign our hope to be.
O glorious King, we bless Thee,
No longer pass Thee by;
O Jesus, we confess Thee
Our Lord enthroned on high.

March 27.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat. Now, the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be"; that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots. *John 19, 23. 24.*

The Twenty-second Psalm, which contains so many wonderful prophecies of our Lord's Passion and death, also foretold the casting of lots for His garments. This again proves to us that no mere man died for us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, but, as foretold in Holy Scripture, a *divine* Savior, God's holy, incarnate Son Himself. How, then, should we ever doubt His perfect work of our redemption? In viewing the parting of His raiment here under the cross, are we not forcibly reminded of the apostle's words, 2 Cor. 8, 9: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich"? We had lost the dress of holy beauty in which our God had created us. By reason of our sin we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses in the sight of God are as filthy rags. Therefore our Savior here suffers the loss of His clothes, hangs so poor and naked on the cross, that He might cover our sinful nakedness and purchase for us the garment of everlasting holiness and righteousness. The garments we now wear to cover our bodies are perpetual reminders of our sin-fallen state. "I counsel thee," says the true and faithful Witness, Rev. 3, 18, "to buy of Me white raiment that thou mayest be clothed and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Whoever possesses that "white raiment" of his Savior can exult with Isaiah (61, 10): "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Lord Jesus, when we stand afar
And gaze upon Thy holy cross,
In love of Thee and scorn of
self,
Oh, may we count the world as
loss!

When we behold Thy bleeding
wounds
And the rough way that Thou
hast trod,
Make us to hate the load of sin
That lay so heavy on our God.

Give us an ever-living faith
To gaze beyond the things we see;
And in the mystery of Thy death
Draw us and all men unto Thee.

March 28.

When Jesus, therefore, saw His mother and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then saith He to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. *John 19, 26, 27.*

Roman Catholic expositors misinterpret these loving words of our dying Lord to His bereaved and broken-hearted mother. Given to the idolatrous worship of Mary and wishing to magnify her power and glory, they maintain that the apostle John here represents all Christians to whom the Lord now gives Mary as their mother that she might in future care for them, love them, and intercede for them! But it is very clear from our Lord's words that He does not give John into Mary's care, but Mary into the safe-keeping of John. It is His mother that needs comfort and protection, now that He is severing all earthly ties which heretofore united Him with her and is going back to the glory which He had with His Father in heaven before the world began. He therefore bequeaths her as a precious legacy of love to John, who from that very hour took the mother of his Lord into his own home and provided for her to the end of her days. So our gracious Lord still provides for His Christians, especially for the lonely, the forsaken, the widows, and orphans. They are all as near and dear to Him as was Mary, His mother. He tells us so Himself when He asks, *Matt. 12, 48—50*: "Who is My mother? And who are My brethren?" And stretching forth His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and *mother*." In our Christian widows and orphans the Lord has left us a sacred pledge of His love. Let us, therefore, provide for them, comfort and cheer them for His dear sake, as John did with Christ's mother, Mary.

Thou who with dying lips
Thy mother didst commend
Unto the tender care
Of Thy beloved friend;
Thou who by Lazarus' grave
In human grief didst groan,
Turn, Lord, Thine eyes on those
Left in the world alone.

Thou who didst call Thy Twelve
Their home and friends to leave
And in Thy kingdom all,
Yea, more than all, receive,
To those bereft of all,
Thy pitying love extend
And let them find in Thee
Father and home and friend.

March 29.

And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Thou that destroyest the Temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise also the chief priests, mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God." The thieves also which were crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth. *Matt. 27, 39—44.*

"But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.'" These prophetic words of the Twenty-second Psalm were fulfilled to the letter in our suffering Redeemer, as may be clearly seen from our text. Not a word of comfort, of pity, does He hear in His great woe and agony; only bitter scorn and reproach. But the hooting and cursing enemies of our crucified Lord are glorifying Him and His blessed work of redemption without knowing it. "He saved others," they mockingly say and thus bear witness to His glorious miracles in which He helped the poor and sick among them. "He trusted in God," they jeer and thus testify to His pious life among them, to His abiding trust and confidence in God. "He said, I am the Son of God," they scoff and thereby unwittingly confirm the divine honor which He claimed, and which He maintained by His divine words and works among them. Ah, He could have stepped down from the cross and destroyed these blaspheming enemies with one word of His omnipotent lips, but He endures their cruel mockery patiently, silently, being obedient to His Father even unto the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!
Hail, Thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us;
Thou didst free salvation bring.
Hail, Thou agonizing Savior,
Bearer of our sin and shame!
By Thy merits we find favor;
Life is given through Thy name.

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,
All our sins on Thee were laid;
By almighty love anointed,
Thou hast full atonement made.
All Thy people are forgiven
Through the virtue of Thy blood;
Opened is the gate of heaven,
Peace is made 'twixt man and God.

March 30.

And he said unto Jesus, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And Jesus said unto him, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Luke 23, 42. 43.

"He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors." Most gloriously do we see this prophecy of Isaiah 53 fulfilled in the conversion and salvation of the dying thief. He is brought to repentance through what he hears and sees of his crucified Lord and Savior. His repentance is genuine. He rebukes the blaspheming thief on the left and confesses: "We receive the due reward of our deeds." He testifies to the holiness and blamelessness of his Savior by declaring: "This Man hath done nothing amiss." His faith triumphs over sin, death, and hell by humbly and trustingly praying: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And in His free grace and mercy the Lord accepts this criminal, who has no merit, no goodness, to boast of, and tells him: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise!" If ever, we see the solemn truth established here that we are saved by the all-sufficient merit and freely forgiving mercy of our Savior alone, and by nothing else in the world. Have we made His saving merit ours by true repentance and faith, as did the dying thief? So many put off their repentance to their dying day and appeal to the example of the dying thief on the right of our Lord. But they forget the warning example of *the thief on the left*, who did *not* repent and was *not* saved. *To-day*, while you hear the pleading voice of your Savior: "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!" — *to-day* harden not your hearts, but come to Jesus! *To-morrow* it may be *too late*!

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, as vile as he,
Washed all my sins away.

March 31.

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? *Matt. 27, 46.*

"God by God forsaken! Who can grasp it?" Luther exclaims, overwhelmed by this soul-piercing cry of our dying Lord. We can gaze only from afar, and in holy trembling awe, at this mystery of mysteries: Christ, God's incarnate Son, forsaken for three long hours by God Himself! Who can grasp it? The sudden, terrifying gloom that overcast the earth at full midday when the very sun seemed blotted out from the heavens was a reflection of the fearsome and impenetrable darkness that now filled our dying Savior's soul. His heavenly Father, the central Sun of His life, now hid His gracious face from Him. He now beheld nothing but the forbidding countenance of the angry, avenging, holy Judge. God had now become cruel to Him (Job 30, 21) and made Him to be sin for us and suffered Him to expiate the very last and extremest penalty of sin — separation from God, the divine Source of all life and happiness. He now dwells in that outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, where the terrors of the damned consist in this very thing, that they are forever forsaken by God. O wonderful, O adorable Savior! Though God in His just anger, on account of sin, forsakes Him, *He* does not forsake God, but clings to Him with the trustful cry: "*My God!*" In His agony our sin was judged and condemned; by His cry of faith, "*My God!*" we are saved. Faith in Him is now the way to God's paternal heart in our darkest night of woe. That we can believe in Him and through Him find a merciful God and Father in heaven we owe to this divine victory of faith on the cross. Who now puts his faith in Him can never be entirely forsaken by God, but may and should always fly to Him in his bitterest grief, with this trustful prayer in his heart and on his lips:—

O God, forsake me not!
But lead, full of compassion,
With loving hands Thy child
That I may gain salvation
When here my course is run;
Be Thou my Light, my Lot,
My Staff, my Rock, my
Shield,—
O God, forsake me not!

O God, forsake me not!
Take not Thy Spirit from me
And suffer not the might
Of sin to overcome me;
Increase my feeble faith,
Which Thou Thyself hast wrought;
Be Thou my Strength and
Power,—
O God, forsake me not!

April 1.

I thirst. *John 19, 28.*

"They gave Me also gall for My meat, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." This prophecy of Psalm 69 was fulfilled; for when our dying Lord cried out in His great thirst, we are told in the Passion history that there was set a vessel full of vinegar near the cross, and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop and put it to His mouth. "I thirst!" Oh, what intense suffering these two little words disclose on many a sick- and death-bed! But how much more pitiful they sound on the parching lips of our Lord, consumed by His long, long sufferings of body and soul! "I thirst!" So He cries out whose lips invited so kindly: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." John 7, 37. How His burning thirst ought to cut us to the quick when we consider that He suffers it for our sakes! In vain does the rich man in hell plead for a drop of water to cool his parching tongue. That would have been our fate but for this our thirsting and atoning Savior. When He said to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's Well (John 4, 7): "Give Me to drink," He thirsted, above all, for her poor, perishing soul. He says to her: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That longing fills His heart to-day while He is sitting on His throne of glory, as it did in the days of His flesh and there on the cross. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. He thirsts after us that we may thirst after Him. Let us not deny His loving plea. Let us go to Him in humble, penitent faith, and He will fulfil His gracious promise also in us: "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." John 6, 35.

Alas! and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man the creature's sin!

Thus might I hide my blushing face
While His dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness
And melt my eyes in tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe.
Here, Lord, I give myself away;
'Tis all that I can do.

April 2.

It is finished. *John 19, 30.*

No greater shout of triumph ever rose to the listening skies than this victory-announcing cry of our expiring Lord. Though bleeding from innumerable wounds and exhausted unto death from the raging conflict, the mighty Captain of our salvation has routed the enemy and forever redeemed our immortal souls from the bondage of sin and death and hell. He now rejoices and exults that peace is again established between God and man, that the fiery wrath of God is quenched, His exacting Law fulfilled, forgiveness of sins secured, the lost paradise regained, and the kingdom of God, the kingdom of righteousness, of joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, founded on earth. No greater word — for it is only one word in the original language — was ever uttered in heaven or on earth, since no greater deed was ever accomplished by God or man. It fills heaven with joy, earth with salvation, hell with fear and despair. It is the joyous shout of our victorious King, the Lord, mighty in battle. It is the exulting cry of our merciful High Priest, who can now enter into the Holy of Holies with His sacrificial blood and obtain eternal redemption for all mankind. It is the glorious announcement of our Prophet, whose messengers can now go out into all the world with the sweet invitation: "Come; for all things are now ready. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself; therefore be ye reconciled to God!" Through all eternity will this blessed cry of victory resound before the throne of the Lamb, where saved sinners from every tribe and nation will sing: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. 5, 12. With what joy we ought to hear it and make it the rock of our salvation! For it alone can defend us against the roaring waves of sin and give joy and peace to our guilty conscience.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfil Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

April 3.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. *Luke 23, 46.*

With a loud voice our Savior bows His thorn-crowned head and dies upon the cross. But dying for Him is not compulsory. He does not die because He has to die, but because He wants to die. His death is a free act of His great love, as He declares, John 10, 18: "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." He does not think of His poor, wound-torn body. Of that He knows what is written Ps. 16, 9, 10: "Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth; My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." But His soul He commends, for the time being, into the hands of His heavenly Father, at whose omnipotent right hand He shall soon sit and live and reign through all eternity. In His death He secures for us the victory over death; for He goes into death to abolish death and to bring life and immortality to light. Now we can look up to Him in our last hour and pray with David: "Into Thy hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Ps. 31, 5. So John Hus prayed while being burned at the stake, and Luther made it his dying prayer, and countless believing souls of all ranks and conditions in life have fallen peacefully asleep with these trustful words on their dying lips. Let us give ourselves in grateful faith and love to our redeeming Lord in life, then we shall be able to make this victorious prayer ours also in death.

Thanks from my heart I offer
Thee, Jesus, dearest Friend,
For all that Thou didst suffer;
My good didst Thou intend.
Ah! grant that I may ever
To Thy truth faithful be;
When soul and body sever,
May I be found in Thee!

When hence I must betake me,
Lord, do not Thou depart!
O nevermore forsake me
When death is at my heart!
When soul and body languish,
O leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish
By virtue of Thine own!

Be Thou my Consolation
And Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion
When my last hour draws nigh.
My eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee.
Who dieth thus dies well!

April 4.

And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose. *Matt. 27, 51. 52.*

Wonderful and mighty signs accompanied the death of our Lord. The veil that hung before the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem was woven four fingers thick and thirty yards long and broad. It hid the mercy-seat from all eyes and perpetually proclaimed to the Jews: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." It was death for any one to go behind the veil. Only on the Great Day of Atonement dared the high priest pass behind its forbidding folds with the blood of the sacrificial lamb, which he sprinkled against the mercy-seat for the reconciliation of his own sins and the sins of the people. This massive veil was suddenly rent from top to bottom when our Lord Jesus expired on the cross. The true Lamb of God had now died for the sins of the world and won for sinners a free and open access to the Throne of Mercy. Nothing can now separate the reconciled children of God from their heavenly Father, neither sin nor tribulation, nor even death. For we are told that at the death of the Savior an earthquake took place, and the graves were opened, and many sleeping saints came back to life. Death is now swallowed up in victory through the atoning death of the Prince of Life. Now we can triumphantly sing: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" In these rising saints we behold the glorious first-fruits of our Savior's death-conquering sacrifice. Now the dry bones begin to stir and revive in the quickening breath of the heavenly Eastertide that henceforth should waft over this land of death and corruption from Christ's saving cross.

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness;
God hath brought His Israel
Into joy from sadness;
Loosed from Pharaoh's bitter
yoke
Jacob's sons and daughters;
Led them with unmoistened foot
Through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls to-day;
Christ hath burst His prison
And from three days' sleep in
death
As a sun hath risen;
All the winter of our sins,
Long and dark, is flying
From His light, to whom we give
Thanks and praise undying.

April 5.

Now, when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly, this was the Son of God." And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.

Matt. 27, 54; Luke 23, 47. 48.

Wonderful and mighty signs in nature accompanied the death of our Lord. Great and glorious signs His saving death now calls forth also in the hearts of men. The dying thief was the first-fruits of His blessed cross among the Jews; this confessing and believing centurion is His first-fruits among the Gentiles. Of the brave Roman captain Gordius, who was dragged before the heathen authorities at Caesarea in the great persecution of the year 303 and urged to deny his Savior and thus spare his life, it is told that he replied: "I remember the first centurion who stood by the cross of Jesus and became convinced of His divine glory by the mighty signs that were done, how he did not hesitate openly to confess his Savior's name before the furious Jews by declaring, 'Truly, this is the Son of God.'" Then did this brave soldier sign himself with the cross and willingly suffer death for Jesus' sake. So will we ever confess before all doubters and unbelievers of these last, sad days: "Truly, the crucified Jesus is the Son of God!" But we can do so only when, like the people under the cross, we have learned to repent and to smite our breasts in deep contrition over our sins and, when we have wandered away from our Savior, to return to Him with believing and humble hearts. Verily, our hearts must prove harder than the rocks that burst at the Savior's death if we can view His great sufferings and dying love for us with coldness and indifference. God grant us true repentance for Jesus' sake!

With broken heart and contrite sigh,
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry;
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free;
O God, be merciful to me!

I smite upon my troubled breast,
With deep and conscious guilt oppressed;
Christ and His cross my only plea:
O God, be merciful to me!

Far off I stand with tearful eyes
Nor dare uplift them to the skies;
But Thou dost all my anguish see;
O God, be merciful to me!

Nor alms nor deeds that I have done
Can for a single sin atone;
To Calvary alone I flee;
O God, be merciful to me!

April 6.

The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, (for that Sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with Him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true that ye might believe. For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.

John 19, 31—37.

Before our Savior began His final Passion, He told His disciples that all things written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man should be accomplished. And as He declared, so it came to pass. All the age-old, wonderful prophecies concerning His sufferings and work of redemption were fulfilled to the letter in His Passion. How the divine prophecies concerning His crucified and lifeless body were observed, we learn from the text for to-day. All these divine prophecies write with indelible, golden letters for us over the cross: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When the soldier opened our lifeless Savior's side, we are told that blood and water came forth. His holy, precious blood is the sin-offering which He brought for our transgressions, the incomparable price which He paid for the redemption of our sin-lost souls. Now we can joyfully and adoringly confess: "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." And the water from His wounded side is emblematic of the streams of reviving and quickening waters of salvation that now shall flow through all this desert world.

Now, my soul, thy voice upraising,
Tell in sweet and mournful strain
How the Crucified, enduring
Grief and wounds and dying pain,
Freely of His love was offered,
Sinless was for sinners slain.

Though His heart the spear is piercing,
Though His foes have seen Him die,
Blood and water thence are streaming
In a tide of mystery;
Water from our guilt to cleanse us,
Blood to win us crowns on high.

April 7.

And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now, in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand. *John 19, 38—42.*

In a garden, the garden of Eden, man fell away from his God and brought sin and death into the world. In a garden, the garden of Gethsemane, our blessed Lord began His atoning Passion for the sin of the world. In a garden, the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, sin, and guilt, and wrath were buried with our Lord Jesus Christ. The handwriting which accused us was nailed with Him to the cross. He has buried it with Him in His hillside grave, where it will remain forever and never again testify against us. That is a glorious, happy truth, for which we cannot thank Him sufficiently through all eternity. Hear it, all ye troubled, agonizing souls, filled with fear and dread on account of your sins: The grave of your Savior has swallowed up all your guilt and punishment. No one, neither God nor man nor Satan, can longer accuse and condemn you for your sins. For what does the grave of your Savior witness so undeniably and comfortingly? Why, that He is really and truly dead, which means that He has obtained for you a real and true redemption from the wages of sin, which is death. "Who is he that condemneth?" Paul therefore exults. Rom. 8, 34. It is Christ that died for us "and *was buried* according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. 15, 4. How we ought to thank Him and adore His self-sacrificing love! "O Love! O Love! how strong art Thou! In shroud and grave Thou lay'st Him low Whose word the mountains rendeth!" But the greatest love we can show our crucified and buried Lord is to do what Paul admonishes, Rom. 6, 3, 4: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

April 8.

Now, the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first." Pilate said unto them, "Ye have a watch; go your way; make it as sure as ye can." So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch. *Matt. 27, 62—66.*

"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." *Matt. 12, 39. 40.* "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." *John 2, 19.* In these blessed words our Lord had clearly foretold His resurrection from the dead, and the chief priests and Pharisees have not forgotten them. Therefore they go to Pilate and persuade Him to seal the grave and set a watch of soldiers around it. But He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. All their cunning, might, and wickedness are like mere gossamer threads when pitted against the omnipotence and wisdom of the Almighty. Instead of hindering the Lord's resurrection, these wicked plotters must serve to establish its truth beyond all doubt. All new lies and slanders which they invented after the Lord arose prove of no avail. The crucified Lord has risen and reigns in the midst of His enemies. Still to-day the voice of rejoicing and salvation is heard in the tabernacles of the righteous; for the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

The grave itself a garden is
Where loveliest flowers abound,
Since Christ, our never-fading Life,
Sprang from that holy ground.

Oh, give us grace to die to sin,
That we, O Lord, may have
A holy, happy rest in Thee,
A Sabbath in the grave.

Lord, through the grave and gate of death
May we, with Thee, arise
To an Eternal Easter Day
Of glory in the skies!

April 9.

And he saith to them: "Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him." *Mark 16, 6.*

The sorrowing women still believe their beloved Master dead and in His grave when they went out to His burial-place on Easter Sunday morning to anoint His body. But what must they see and hear? The stone is rolled away from Christ's hillside grave. The place where His body lay is empty. A white-stoled messenger from heaven tells them their Lord is risen from the dead and will meet them in Galilee, as He had said unto them. *As He had said unto them.* Ah, if the disciples had only remembered and firmly believed the reassuring promises their Lord had given them regarding His resurrection after three days, they would not have been the terrified and despairing little flock they were while their Lord rested in the grave. But they had forgotten His sweet assurances and proved as comfortless as we generally are when death suddenly claims one of our dear ones. But why should our faith be so weak and shaken in the presence of death and the grave? Is not the Savior, in whom we believe, beyond all doubt the almighty Son of God and sovereign Lord of life and death? Did He not prove His divine power over death and corruption when He awoke Lazarus and other sleepers from the last, long sleep? And did He not keep and perform every saying of His concerning His sufferings and atoning death on the cross? Does He not fulfil before our very eyes, even to-day, all His divine prophecies regarding His Church, the spread of His Gospel, the signs of the last days? What, then, can be more sure and convincing than the infallible Word of our God and Savior? What reason have we to doubt that He did not with divine power and majesty perform His word uttered to the Jews, John 2, 19: "Destroy this temple," My body, "and in three days I will raise it up"? Oh, may God's Holy Spirit confirm and seal in our hearts during these blessed Easter days the soul-reviving, comforting truth of our Savior's resurrection from the dead!

Jesus, my Redeemer, lives!
I, too, unto life must waken;
Endless joy my Savior gives;
Shall my courage, then, be shaken?
Shall I fear? or could the Head
Rise and leave His members dead?

(For the Easter Sunday prayer see Appendix.)

April 10.

Christ was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. *Rom. 4, 25.*

The greatest and most precious gift which our risen Lord brings for us out of the grave is our justification before God. On this justification alone rests our sure hope of our resurrection from the dead and of life everlasting. Only where there is *justification*, that is, forgiveness of sin, is there life and salvation. Through Jesus' resurrection we *are* publicly pardoned, forgiven, justified, that is, declared free from all sin and guilt and punishment by God Himself. Burdened with our sins, with the sins of the whole world, our Savior hung on the cross. He was our Bondsman, our Substitute. In Him we all, all human beings in the whole world, were suffering and atoning for our sins, as Paul declares, 2 Cor. 5, 14: "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." But did God, the righteous and eternal Judge, accept Christ's vicarious atonement for our sin and guilt? If our Bondsman, Christ, had remained in His grave, that would have been clear and convincing evidence that God had not accepted Christ's payment for our sin and guilt. But now God Himself has raised Jesus, our Substitute, from the prison-house of death and has thereby declared before all the world and for all time to come: "It is finished, O sinners; your salvation is won! I am reconciled; for your Bondsman, My dear Son, has fulfilled all the demands of My holy Law for you. In Him I freely pardon and forgive you all your sin and guilt. Nothing more can keep you from Me. Come to My reconciled heart and into My loving arms!" Hence Paul exults, *Rom. 5, 18*: "Therefore, as by the offense of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto *justification* of life." All we redeemed and justified sinners have to do now is to accept this free gift of forgiveness and make it ours by faith, rejoicing and thanking God for it as long as we live.

Father of Jesus Christ, my Lord,
My Savior, and my Head,
I trust in Thee, whose powerful
word
Hath raised Him from the dead.

Thou know'st, for my offense
He died
An rose again for me,
Fully and freely justified
That I might live to Thee.

Eternal life to all mankind
Thou hast in Jesus given;
And all who seek, in Him shall find
The happiness of heaven.

April 11.

Him God raised up the third day and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. *Acts 10, 40, 41.*

No other fact of history is so well established as the resurrection of our Lord. The character of its divinely chosen witnesses is unimpeachable; their testimony in its behalf, unassailable. When we read the story of our Savior's resurrection as it is preserved for us in the four gospels and in the letters left by the apostles, we see that the risen Lord appeared to His disciples for forty days at different times and places; now to one, then to several, then to the Eleven, even to five hundred of His followers at one time. And He did not appear only for a moment and then suddenly vanish again, but He spoke with them, ate and drank with them, and had them feel and touch Him in order to convince them, as we read Luke 24, 39: "Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." All attempts made by unbelievers to weaken such clear and unmistakable evidence of our Savior's resurrection only serve to strengthen and increase its convincing power. When these prejudiced enemies of the Gospel declare these holy witnesses to have been deceivers, we can ask them: Since when do deceivers practise their deceit for the reward of prison, stripes, persecution, and death? That was the only reward the disciples found on earth with their Gospel of the crucified and risen Savior. When others declare the disciples to have been honest, but self-deceived visionaries, who only imagined that they saw Christ alive again after His death, we reply: The disciples never expected their Master to return alive to them; and He had the greatest trouble to convince them of His resurrection. When, finally, the story of Christ's resurrection is declared to be a story which arose only in later centuries, the well-proved fact remains that the disciples preached and proclaimed it ten days after Christ's ascension, at Pentecost, and were persecuted for it by the Jews and later by the heathen authorities. Unbelievers might just as well try to extinguish God's sun in the heavens as to disprove the well-attested truth of our Savior's glorious resurrection.

April 12.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. *Job 19, 25.*

Sitting on his ash-heap, one sore boil from the top of his head to the sole of his foot, shunned by his neighbors, forsaken by the wife of his bosom, falsely accused of being a secret slave of sin by his dearest friends, seeing nothing but heart-breaking misery around him and the gloomy grave before him — what a pitiful sight suffering Job presents! He is, in fact, nothing but a living corpse. Where did mortal man ever suffer more than he did in body, soul, or mind? Yet out of the appalling night of his woe and misery he sends forth this divine utterance of his faith in his living Redeemer; and millions upon millions of later sufferers have been comforted and cheered through it. What gives Job such sublime faith? Nothing but the Word, the promise of His God telling him of the Seed of the Woman that should bruise the Serpent's head. To this he clings with unfaltering faith and through it soars triumphantly, as on wings of an eagle, over all his afflictions. Oh, that we and all Christian sufferers might attain to such triumphant faith! That we might know with such divine assurance as Job did that the living God Himself has become our Redeemer from death and the grave! But it does not suffice for us merely to think it true, to have learned it in school, to speak and read about it; we must know it in God-given heart-faith if it is to save us. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10, 9. How can we attain to such saving faith in Christ's resurrection? Alone by the faith-working power of God's Word, as Paul declares in the preceding verse: "The *Word* is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the Word of faith, which we preach." Rom. 10, 4. Then let us make it our dearest employ to read and study what God's Word tells us of the resurrection of our Lord and of our own, and His Holy Spirit will quicken, seal, and confirm it in us and make it an overflowing fountain of trust and joy and happiness.

I know that my Redeemer lives!
What comfort this sweet sentence
gives!

He lives, he lives, who once was dead,
He lives, my ever-living Head.

He lives triumphant from the
grave,

He lives eternally to save;
He lives all-glorious in the sky,
He lives exalted there on high.

April 13.

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself and mine eyes shall behold, and not another. *Job 19, 26. 27.*

“Sweet truth to me, I shall arise And with these eyes my Savior see.” That was the blessed assurance Job had in his great suffering and which he here confesses. He turns his eyes away from all sorrow, tribulation, and death to that life which, he knows, awaits him at the side of his Redeemer, a life which shall never pass away. He is divinely sure that he will arise from the grave, that his poor pain-racked and disease-wasted body shall be gloriously renewed, and that he shall see his living Redeemer face to face. O glorious hope of every true Christian! He can truthfully sing and say: “I am only flesh and blood, And on this corruption seizeth; But I know my Lord and God From the grave my body raiseth, That with Him eternally In His glory I may be. Glorified I shall again With this skin then be enshrouded, In this body I shall then See my God with eyes unclouded; In this flesh I then shall see Jesus Christ eternally.” O what joy that will be, to rise from the bed of corruption in our glorified bodies and to see our loved ones again, who died before our eyes so frail and weak and helpless, but who now wear the shining robes of immortality! And greater joy still to see Him face to face whom we loved, and believed in, as our Savior, although we never had seen Him here. How often our hearts moan and cry in this valley of darkling shadows: “As the hart [the deer] panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” Ps. 42, 1. 2. What joy, what rapture, will fill us when with these our eyes we shall see Him, our God and Savior, in all His matchless beauty and glory and then also see and understand His saving ways with us! That will be a never-ending Easter Day of joy and happiness. And it has all been won and procured for us by our blessed Savior’s resurrection from the dead. He Himself gives us the assurance: “Because I live, ye shall live also.” He prayed for us: “Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17, 24. How can we do otherwise than joyfully confess with Job: “I know that *my* Redeemer liveth”?

April 14.

Christ shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. *Phil. 3, 21.*

Job's faith in the resurrection of the body is Paul's faith too. It is the faith of every true Christian. We confess it in the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body"; but we say it often so listlessly, when the sacred truth ought to fill us with boundless joy. Our Savior's almighty word and power are *divine* and therefore absolutely reliable guarantees of our resurrection, no matter what our own sin-corrupted heart or what ranting infidels may interpose. It is only meet and just that our body should rise again. Our body, together with our soul, has borne all the painful burdens of our life here on earth, toiled and groaned under the curse of sin, and suffered the wages of sin, which is death. It is right and proper that it should share with the soul the redemption from sin, the joy and happiness of eternal life. Our body is an essential part of our being. If only our spirit lived after death, as so many hold, we should be only half alive, not the same beings or persons we were before death. But no! Our redemption by Christ is a perfect redemption, including our *body* as well as our soul, and we have our blessed Savior's word for it that He will call our body forth out of the grave. And—O glorious truth!—it shall then be like His own glorious body, forever free from the trammels of this earthly existence, free from all pain, sickness, disease, and deformities that so often afflict us here. There shall be no blind, no deaf, no mute, no cripples, no invalids, in heaven. Rejoice, ye unfortunate cross-bearers, who are perhaps afflicted with some incurable disease or some bodily defect. In a little while your cross shall cease, and your Savior will come to change you into the beauty and glory of His own glorified body. What happiness that will be!

What now sickens, mourns, and sighs,
Christ with Him in glory bringeth;
Earthly is the seed and dies,
Heavenly from the grave it springeth;
Natural is the death we die
Spiritual our life on high.

Then take comfort, nay, rejoice!
For His members Christ will cherish;
Fear not, they will know His voice,
Though awhile they seem to perish,
When the final trump is heard
And the deaf, cold grave is stirred.

April 15.

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

1 Cor. 15, 54—57.

“To-morrow I am going home!” repeatedly exclaimed the sainted Dr. Walther the day before his death. For this faithful servant of our Savior, death was really swallowed up in victory and had lost its very last vestige of terror. To our pious teacher, the restorer of our ruined American Lutheran Church, the grave was but the door through which he entered into the home of everlasting rest and joy of Jesus. With Job he could say, and did say in all his many sermons and writings: “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” In his ever-memorable sermon on Easter Day, 1851, in which he so convincingly refutes all the arguments brought forth by modern unbelief against our Savior’s resurrection, he gave the following eloquent testimony of his faith: “That [the resurrection of Christ] is the reason why all Christians can declare before all the world: ‘Know, O world, that we actually enjoy the grace of God.’ Does the world say: ‘But are you not still sinners and therefore debtors?’ They can answer: ‘No; who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. He justified our Bondsman and in Him justified us.’ Does the world object: ‘But does not the Law still condemn you?’ They can reply: ‘No; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, — *He* fulfilled the Law.’ Does the world again say: ‘But does not death still await you and hell threaten you?’ They can answer: ‘No; our death is no longer death, but the door of life; and hell? — we can laugh it to scorn; for death is swallowed up in victory.’ In conclusion, does the religious fanatic ask: ‘But do you not *feel that you still have sin?* How, then, can you boast of grace and righteousness?’ They can answer: ‘True, the sense of sin and guilt lies as a heavy stone on our heart and conscience. But go with us to the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. In this grave *He* was imprisoned who had taken upon Himself our sins. But, behold! the stone is rolled away, the grave is empty, and shining messengers of God say to us: “*He is risen!*”’ O glorious message: “The stone is rolled away from the grave of *my* sins, *my* death, *my* condemnation! Hallelujah!”

April 16.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Pet. 1, 3.

Human hopes are like pretty, but elusive butterflies — always on the wing! Though the children of men eagerly chase after them, they rarely, if ever, catch them. It is even as Wordsworth sings: “Hopes, what are they? Beads of morning Strung on slender blades of grass; Or a spider’s web adorning In a strait and treacherous path.” How few men realize their “great expectations” in life! But of the hopes of the hypocrite and the wicked the Bible says they are like spider-webs and shall utterly perish. To the unbeliever the grave spells the end of all his fondest hopes. Death for him means the end of all. Whoever has witnessed the utter despair of unbelievers at the grave of their loved ones and has heard their heart-piercing wails of hopeless grief knows what it means to be without hope. It is different with God’s people, with true Christians. By nature their hearts also are bereft of all blessed hope for eternity. But God in His abundant mercy has begotten them again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of their Savior. Because He lives, they firmly know and believe that they and their dear dead ones shall live also. Though they also weep, weep bitterly, at the grave of their loved ones, they do not weep as those who have no hope. With the eyes of faith they see in the coffin the cradle of a new and glorified body and in the grave a chamber of undisturbed repose, in the graveyard *God’s acre*, where the Lord sows seeds of immortality. Yes, their hope is a lively hope, displaying and exercising its divine and comforting power when to human eyes everything seems dark and hopeless. And by what means does the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort work this blessed hope in them? Peter tells us in v. 23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the Word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever.” Then let us diligently use the Word of God and ask Him in our daily prayers to work such lively hope in us; for we know not when death shall come to our doors. In the midst of life we are in death. But if we have this hope of everlasting life in us by the resurrection of our Savior, we can welcome death at all times as a smiling angel of peace sent by the heavenly Father to carry us home, home to Jesus.

April 17.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.

2 Cor. 5, 14, 15.

A life for a life! Our blessed Savior redeemed us at the cost of His own holy life; now, in return, we owe our life in loving gratitude to Him. "After we have been redeemed by a ransom of such endless and unceasing value, what use should we make of our liberty? This may be illustrated by three words of which tradition says that they were used in old England at the liberation of prisoners. They were the three Latin words *Exite, Gaudete, Cavete*, that is, 'Go forth, rejoice, beware!' Come out of your cell, rejoice over your liberty, and beware lest you get into prison again. The price of your liberty has been paid down by the Son of God. Therefore: *Exite!* Come out of the kingdom of darkness. Go forth from under the curse of the Law. Renounce the service of sin and Satan and assert your liberty in Jesus Christ. And accepting the grace extended to you in Jesus Christ: *Gaudete!* Rejoice over the liberty with which the Son of God has made you free and say to Him: Thanks be unto Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, because Thy sacred blood has made me free. . . . And in order that you may be truly thankful, never forget the *Cavete* which in ancient Britain was addressed to pardoned prisoners for their warning. It is the 'Go and sin no more.' What pardoned prisoner will be so foolish as to return to his cell, preferring the darkness of a dingy dungeon to light and liberty? Should we, who have been freed by Christ, yield our members as servants to unrighteousness? No! Ever must we guard against sin and live unto Christ, striving more and more to become like unto Him. Let us daily consecrate our heart, our mind, and all our members to Him who drank for us the potion which sin had mixed and earned for us the cup of everlasting joy."

It was a strange and dreadful fray
When Death and Life contended;
But it was Life that won the day,
The reign of Death was ended.
Holy Scripture plainly saith
That Death is swallowed up by Death,
Made henceforth a derision.
Hallelujah!

April 18.

Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. 1 Cor. 5, 7.

Paul here leads us back to that wonderful night in Egypt when the angel of the Lord went forth and slew every first-born son in the land of Pharaoh, but passed over the houses whose doors were marked with the blood of the paschal lamb. Now the hour of liberty had struck for the captive children of Israel. With songs of rejoicing they went forth from their house of bondage and began their march to the Promised Land. Israel's redemption through the paschal lamb was prophetic of the greater redemption that came to God's people when Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," was John the Baptist's joyful message. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and honor, and glory, and blessing," is the jubilant and adoring song of the saints in heaven. "Delivered for our offenses, raised again for our justification!" is the exulting message of this blessed Eastertide for all our ears and hearts. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Cor. 5, 8. May every day in our lives thus prove a holy, blessed Easter Day! When sickness comes to us or to one of our loved ones, let us rejoice that we have in Christ our Paschal Lamb, who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows and still bears them with us. When our sins accuse us and our conscience weeps within us, we have in Christ our Paschal Lamb, upon whom was the chastisement of our peace and with whose stripes we are healed. When sorrow and grief for our departed near and dear ones fill our hearts, we can find heavenly comfort in the thought that they are before the throne of the Lamb, who leads them unto living fountains of waters and wipes away all tears from their eyes. When death comes to us and the terrors of the grave affright us, Christ, our Passover, will lead us safely through the raging billows and bring us rejoicing to the promised land of eternal life.

Come, let us sing the song of songs!
The saints in heaven began the strain,
The homage which to Christ belongs:
"Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain!"

Slain to redeem us by His blood,
To cleanse from every sinful stain,
And make us kings and priests to God:
"Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain!"

April 19.

Now, this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. *1 Cor. 15, 50.*

The question is often asked: Why must we die at all if Christ has really abolished death? Why can He not take us to heaven just as we are, without letting us die first? The Apostle Paul here gives us the answer. He does not deny the resurrection of the body, as unbelievers, who tear his words from their connection, brazenly assert. On the contrary, in this fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians he vigorously upholds and defends the resurrection of the body and conclusively proves that it must take place. When he declares that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, he uses the words in the same sense in which our Lord applied them when He said to Peter, Matt. 16, 17: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." "Flesh and blood" here means our sin-corrupted nature in the utter depravity of all its powers. We children of Adam are so poisoned by sin that we cannot in our present state inherit the kingdom of God, life eternal. Sin, evil, cannot dwell in the sight of the holy God. Ps. 5, 4. But this corruptible, that is, this mortal body, can put on, can be clothed with, incorruption and immortality, and shall do so in the resurrection of the dead. (V. 54.) There is no doubt in Paul's mind about that blessed fact. Hence he cries out, vv. 19. 20: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now *is* Christ risen from the dead and become the First-fruits of them that slept." Through Christ's resurrection, death has become only a sleep for us. Let us learn to look at death in the light of Holy Scripture — as a sleep, from which we shall awake in the image of our Lord's glorified body and in which we shall cast off forever this vile, evil, sinful nature of ours. Phil. 3, 21. What a glorious change that means!

Christ is risen, we are risen!
Shed upon us heavenly grace,
Rain, and dew, and gleams of glory
From the brightness of Thy face,
That, with hearts in heaven dwelling,
We on earth may fruitful be
And by angel-hands be gathered
And be ever, Lord, with Thee.

April 20.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. *Rev. 2, 10.*

Under Marcus Aurelius, the cultured philosopher on the throne of the Caesars, a terrible persecution of the Christians raged. The venerable Polycarp, bishop of the church in Smyrna, was also haled before the tribunal of the Roman consul and commanded to denounce Christ. But the faithful witness replied: "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and He has never done me wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" — and joyfully sealed his confession with his blood. He was faithful unto death. Has not Christ, our Savior and our King, also saved us? Must we not all adoringly fold our hands and confess with our Catechism: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives, and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true"? Through all the years of our weak and helpless childhood, our wayward youth, our middle life, even to old age, He has not failed to help, and forgive, and bless, and save us. Oh, what should we do without this Savior of the lost? How can we ever repay Him for His redeeming, pardoning, protecting, sanctifying, and saving love? Then let us show ourselves faithful to Him with the help of His aiding Spirit — faithful in our prayers, faithful in confessing His blessed name, faithful in crucifying our sinful flesh, faithful in all affliction, faithful to our last, expiring breath. He promises the crown of everlasting life if we prove faithful to Him, and He never yet broke His promise. Many of us, no doubt, renewed and confirmed their baptismal vow at His altar in these holy days of Lent and Easter. Let us remember that sacred vow and make this our daily prayer: —

Lord Jesus, my Salvation,
My Light, my Life divine,
My only Consolation,
O make me wholly Thine!

For Thou hast dearly bought me
With blood and bitter pain;
Let me, since Thou hast sought me,
Eternal life obtain.

April 21.

Jesus saith unto her, "Said I not unto thee that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" *John 11, 40.*

Our Savior speaks these words to Martha at the grave of her brother Lazarus. When He said to the grief-stricken sister: "Thy brother shall rise again," she plaintively replied: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the Last Day." But that event seems too far off to give her any comfort in her present bereavement. In vain the Lord tries to revive her drooping faith by fixing her eyes on Himself, before whom death is but a passing sleep. He tells her those blessed words that have ever since dispelled the grave's tearful gloom with their radiant light: "I am the Resurrection and the Life," He says to her; "he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." But even now in her overwhelming grief she fails to grasp and see the glory of the living God and Redeemer in these majestic words; and when the Lord proceeds to resurrect her dead brother, she interferes and says: "Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days." Hence the Lord in our text rebukes her for her great lack of faith in Him and His almighty power. But are we not like Martha in our great bereavement when death enters our household? Do not we also think that we have lost our loved ones and let their resurrection on the Last Day give us so little comfort? Yet all the while our Lord, our Resurrection and our Life, is with us in His blessed Word to assure us that our dear ones have not perished, but are fallen asleep in Him. They are with Him, and He is with us, and therefore we are still united with them and not separated from them, though their visible presence is gone from us for a while. Verily, we need to study, learn, and believe the article of our resurrection more every day. Luther says rightly: "This is the principal article; on it rests our final hope and salvation, and without it all the others would be useless and without any fruit." And again: "There can be no forgiveness of sin and salvation where this article of Christ's resurrection is not believed." On the walls of his study he often wrote with chalk the word *Vivit*, "He lives," to strengthen his own faith.

He lives, all glory to His name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
O the sweet joy this sentence gives,
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"

April 22.

Go and tell Peter. *Mark 16, 7.*

The joyous Easter tidings impose a sacred missionary duty on all of us. "Go and tell Peter," the Easter angel says to the women at the empty grave of our Lord. Why does He single out Peter from the rest of the disciples? Because poor fallen Peter, most of all, needed to learn the blessed Easter news. In the bitter repentance over his shameful denial of his Lord and Master he could not think otherwise than that the risen Lord would take all the other disciples back into His grace, but never him, the great sinner and backslider. So just *he* is to be told that his risen Lord still loves him and has forgiven him and therefore wants to meet him with the other disciples in Galilee. Behold what a merciful Savior we have in our risen Lord! He will not deal with us after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities. He is ready to forgive even the *backsliding* among His followers and to take them again into His blest companionship. Ah, the world about us is full of fallen Peters, of backsliders, who have denied or still deny their Lord. How many, oh, how many, vowed to be faithful to Him unto death when they renewed their baptismal vow at His altar, and, lo! it needed but a few months or a few years and their Savior was forgotten, forgotten His Gospel, forgotten His altar, forgotten their sacred vow; they live with the world and for the world and practically say as Peter said: "I do not know this man Jesus." Yet they are not happy. Remorse often gnaws at their hearts, and in secret they long to be back with their Savior, with His Gospel, with His Church. Where we know of such a faithless Peter, let us make it our business to tell him the blessed truth that the risen Lord still loves him and is anxious to have him back in His saving fold. "Go and tell Peter!" Let us not forget that sacred Easter duty.

Fill with the radiance of Thy grace
The souls now lost in error's maze,
And all whom in their secret minds
Some dark delusion haunts and blinds.

And all who else have strayed from Thee,
O gently seek! Thy healing be
To every wounded conscience given,
And let them also share Thy heaven.

April 23.

He saith unto him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, "Lovest thou Me?" And He said unto Him, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." *John 21, 17.*

Three times the risen Lord asks Simon Peter the searching question, "Lovest thou Me?" Peter knows the reason, and it grieves him, for it reminds him of his threefold denial. The Lord asks us the same searching question to-day. And He certainly has the right to ask about our love since He loved us even unto death. Do we love Him, and how? We cannot deceive Him. He knows all things, He knows the inmost thoughts of our heart. Do we love Him sincerely and constantly? Must we not hesitate to answer? Knowing all things, He also knows how often our love for Him is so superficial, so frail and forgetful. But let us do as Peter did. He no longer trusts his own heart, no longer asserts that he loves the Lord more than do his fellow-disciples. His pride and sinful self-confidence are gone since that tearful night in which he denied his Savior. Now he takes the Lord into his answer and humbly declares: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee," love Thee truly, since Thou hast so lovingly forgiven my great sin and taken me back as a disciple. He cannot say otherwise; for the very fact that the Lord asks him for his love proves to him that His heart beats in affectionate love towards him and that He therefore desires his love in return. So let us answer with Peter: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest how weak and forgetful our love for Thee is at times; but Thou also knowest that we *desire* to love Thee more strongly, more intensely, more consistently. Thou hast planted this love to Thee, even if it is so weak, in our hearts through Thy great love to us. Do Thou strengthen and increase it." Then the gracious Lord will also say to us as He did to Peter: Feed My sheep; feed My lambs, that is, bring to old and young My Gospel; and in telling them of My love, your own love will grow deeper, firmer, and become the controlling power of your life.

Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come
down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Come to us, dear Lord, and
never,
Nevermore Thy temples leave.

April 24.

Jesus saith unto her, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" *John 20, 15.*

Much ado has ever been made about the Passion Play given every few years by honest peasant folks at the little Bavarian village of Oberammergau. Visitors will flock there from all over the world and declare that they are deeply moved by the play. Pious hearts, however, will question how any sinful mortal dare presume to take our divine Savior's place on the cross and will much prefer to read the story of Christ's saving Passion in the simple and inspired language of the gospels. What more touching and sacred presentation of our Lord's sufferings can we ask than God's Holy Spirit has given us for all time in the writings of the evangelists and the apostles? And, in addition, what an enchanting portrayal we have of the Easter story in the gospels! What glowing pictures the sacred writers draw for us with their inspired pens — of the risen Lord, His empty grave, the frightened women, of the two Emmaus disciples, of the frightened Eleven behind the closed doors, of doubting Thomas, and also of weeping Mary Magdalene looking for the body of her beloved Lord in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea! How well we can all sympathize with her, because in her grief she presents so touchingly the experience of the Christian soul that has lost for a while its sense of sweet communion with its blessed Savior and feels, oh, so unhappy! But how all fear and grief turns into unspeakable joy when the soul hears again the assuring voice of its loving Lord!

Mary to her Savior's tomb
Hasted at the early dawn;
Spice she brought and sweet perfume,
But the Lord she loved was gone.
For a while she weeping stood,
Struck with sorrow and surprise,
Shedding tears, a plenteous flood,
For her heart supplied her eyes.

Jesus, who is always near,
Though too often unperceived,
Came, His drooping child to cheer,
Kindly asking why she grieved.
Though at first she knew Him not,
When He called her by her name,
Then her griefs were all forgot,
For she found He was the same.

April 25.

I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. *John 11, 25.*

What adorable words these words of our blessed Savior are! How all dark fears and doubts in the presence of death must vanish before them, even as the dark shadows of night must vanish before the victorious, golden morning sun! He has proved it, our divine Lord and Savior, that He is in reality the Resurrection and the Life; He proved it in raising Lazarus from the dead and, above all, in His own victorious resurrection. He rose from the dead for our sake to bring life and immortality to light. Hence Luther declares that the words *vivit* (He lives) and *resurrexit* (He is risen) ought to be written in letters reaching from earth to heaven, that everybody could read them and take comfort in them. Do we always find unfailing comfort in these divine words when we think of our departed loved ones? Or do we think and say as so many do: "Oh, if the Lord would only bring my dear ones back from the grave alive, as He did Lazarus, how joyfully I would believe in Him"? But, dear mourning heart, that would not be believing, but *seeing*. Blessed, however, are they that do not see and yet believe. Remember that the resurrection of Lazarus was not a resurrection to immortal life, but only temporary. He and his weeping sisters had to go through the same painful experience again when death came a second time. Would you be willing to do that? Can you really wish your departed dear ones, who are now so happy with the Lord, back again in this world of sin and misery and woe? Certainly not! Why, then, not take comfort and still that aching heart of yours with the fact that the risen Savior is with you, as He certainly *is* in His blessed Word, saying also to you: Lazarus, that is, your dear one, sleeps; but I will awake him out of sleep, and you shall see him again with Me; for "I am the Resurrection and the Life; whosoever believeth in Me shall never die?"

They are not dead, but sleeping,
The loved for whom we mourn,
At rest in Christ's strong keeping,
No longer trouble-worn.
Why, then, should we keep weeping
With hearts sad and forlorn?
They are not dead, but sleeping,
The loved for whom we mourn.

F. W. H.

April 26.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. *1 Cor. 15, 58.*

Immortal Christians, never forget you have immortal work to do in this world. That is the loving exhortation we hear from the lips of the inspired Apostle Paul to-day. We are immortal — glorious truth! And why? Because God has given us the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ. For *us* death means the blessed and visible reunion with our risen Lord in the land of the living throughout all eternity. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” *Rev. 14, 13.* In that land of rest and glory our labor and work will find an eternal reward. Even so insignificant a thing as giving a cup of cold water shall not remain unblessed or be forgotten by the Lord. As His believers and servants we do work, therefore, that is immortal. And what is the immortal work we are called to do? It is to be witnesses for our Lord as long as we live. In word and deed we are to testify of His love. No matter what our calling or work in life may be, it is to be spent in His service, a shining testimonial of His saving grace. Words are dwarfs; deeds are giants. The world has sharp eyes to discover whether our conduct agrees with the profession of our faith. A consecrated Christian life is always a telling argument for the Savior and His Gospel. How many an unbelieving husband has been won for Christ by the devoted, pious life of his Christian wife! Then let us never grow weary or despondent in our Christian calling. Let us prove steadfast, immovable, in all adversity, always abounding in the service of the Savior, though it often seem to be in vain. It never is so. It is always seed for eternity, always blest of the Lord, always brings *immortal* fruit. What a motive that is to faithfulness unto our risen Lord even unto death!

Savior, Thy dying love
Thou gavest me,
Nor should I aught withhold,
Dear Lord, from Thee;
In love my soul would bow,
My heart fulfil its vow,
Some off’ring bring Thee now,
Something for Thee.
O’er the blest mercy-seat,
Pleading for me,
My feeble faith looks up,
Jesus, to Thee;

Help me the cross to bear,
Thy wondrous love declare;
Some song to raise or prayer,
Something for Thee.
Give me a faithful heart,
Likeness to Thee,
That each departing day
Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun,
Some deed of kindness done,
Some wand’rer sought and won,
Something for Thee.

April 27.

Peace be unto you! *John 20, 19.*

The first word our risen Lord addresses to His little flock of frightened disciples as they cower behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, is the sweet, reassuring word *peace*. In that blessed word He pardons their faithlessness and tells them that He comes back to them as their loving Lord, in whose companionship they have nothing to fear; for He has conquered death and hell for them and is able to protect them against all their foes. After this we see these formerly weak, frightened, vacillating disciples turned into bold, fearless witnesses of their Lord, dreading neither persecution nor death for His sake. "Peace be unto you!"—this Easter greeting of our risen Lord sums up for us His blessed saving mission while here on earth. Now we can exult with Paul: "He is our peace." He has made peace between us and our God through His Cross. He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. His Gospel is God's proclamation of peace to the whole sin-lost world. He who came to the disciples that Easter Eve, even He comes to us in His holy Word and gives us peace, peace against the accusation of our sins, if we truly believe in Him. For "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8, 1. He is our Peace in all the storms and vicissitudes of this life; for nothing can pluck us out of His saving hand. He proves Himself our Peace in the extremity of death. Even then we can, by the aid of His Holy Spirit, say with Simeon of old: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace." Oh, blessed shall we be if we cling to the Gospel of our crucified and risen Savior; for in it we find peace, abiding peace of heart, which the world cannot give and even death cannot destroy.

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease
And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace.

April 28.

And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. *John 20, 20.*

The risen Savior shows His hands and His side to His fearing disciples in order to convince them that it is really He and not a ghost. But His wounded hands and side at the same time bear eloquent testimony of His undying love for them. They speak to them of His great sacrifice on the cross, whereby He atoned for their sins, secured their pardon with God, and freed them from all guilt and punishment. Because they read this message of pardoning love in His wounded hands and side, the disciples were glad when they saw their Lord. He might have come to them in righteous anger and wrath and rebuked and condemned them for their faithlessness to Him; but His blessed wounds attest and confirm the word of peace and pardon which He spoke to them. No human tongue will ever be able to describe the rapturous joy that filled the hearts of the first disciples when they saw their Savior returning to them alive from the grave and when they heard His sweet greeting: "Peace be unto you!" Pious hearts, who live in daily loving communion with their Savior, have a little foretaste of this joy. It is sweeter to them than honey or the honeycomb. And it fills their hearts with rapture to know that they will also see their Lord and Savior face to face when He shall come to take them into His mansions of everlasting light and glory. And this joy and hope is no delusion; it is founded on the unshakable promise of God in His holy Word; for John writes expressly, 1 John 3, 2: "We shall see Him" — Jesus — "as He is." Oh, that will be glory indeed!

What shall we be when the freed soul can rise
With unrestrained and bold aspiring flight
To Him who by His wondrous sacrifice
Hath opened heaven and scatter'd sin's dark night;
When from the eye of faith the thin veil drops,
Like wreaths of mist before the morning's rays,
And we behold — the end of all our hopes —
The Son of God in full refulgent blaze?

What shall we be when we shall hear Him say:
"Come, O ye blessed"; when we see Him stand
Robed in the light of everlasting day,
Before the throne of God, at His right hand;
When we behold the eyes from which once flowed
Tears o'er the sin and misery of man;
And the deep wounds from which the precious blood
That made atonement for the world once ran?

April 29.

Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.

John 20, 29.

So says our risen Lord to Thomas and rebukes him for his unbelief. It was a great sin in Thomas not to believe his fellow-disciples when they told him of the Lord's resurrection and stubbornly to say: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." With his unbelief he not only doubted the word of his fellow-disciples, but also the word of His Lord and Savior, who had expressly told him that He would rise again the third day. But this unbelief was also great folly in Thomas. While his fellow-disciples were filled with unspeakable joy and happiness, knowing that their crucified and buried Lord was really alive again, he deprived himself of all this bliss and joy and remained full of fear and despondency. Alas! there are so many nowadays who deprive themselves not only for eight days, as did Thomas, but for a whole lifetime of all the blessed joy which faith in the risen Savior brings to the believing heart. But is it not folly to say: I will not believe in Jesus unless I see Him? The scribes and Pharisees and thousands of Jews saw the Savior with their bodily eyes, and yet they did not believe in Him. Again, it was not their having seen Jesus with their bodily eyes that made the disciples so happy and blessed, but that they saw Jesus with the eyes of faith. If the Lord Jesus should walk visibly through our country to-day, millions would see Him, but none of these millions would thereby be brought to faith in Him as their personal God and Savior from sin and death. But faith does accept Him thus; and no visible sight of the Lord ever worked that faith in the heart of man. That was done, is done, and always will be done alone by the faith-working *Word* of Jesus, by His blessed Gospel.

Lord, have I not, like Thomas, doubted Thee?
Doubted Thy power, Thy goodness, and Thy love;
Doubted that Thou from sin couldst set me free;
Doubted the voice that called me from above?
Melt my hard heart and break my stubborn will,
Wean me from thoughts that trouble and deceive;
O let mine be the blessing promised still
To those who, having seen not, yet believe.

April 30.

And Thomas answered and said unto Him: "My Lord and my God!" *John 20, 28.*

During a Bible-lesson a teacher asked his little tots which were the two greatest letters in the alphabet. When the children failed to answer, he said: Why, children, they are the letters *m* and *y*. We all know that Jesus is the Savior, and that is something very good and great to know. But only when I can take the letter *m* and put it before the other letter *y* and can say, Jesus is *my* Savior, — only then am I blest and happy. It was so with Thomas. He doubted the news that Jesus had risen from the dead. But when Jesus in His wonderful loving-kindness appears also to him and lets him touch His hands and His side, Thomas falls at his risen Savior's feet with the cry of joyous faith: My Lord and my God! All doubt and fear and unbelief have now left him forever. Can we join in his joyous cry of faith? It is not enough to know that Jesus is *a* Savior; the devils also know that truth, and yet they tremble. Jesus must become *our* Savior by personal, undoubting faith. He must be more to us than a great religious teacher, a wise prophet, a mighty miracle-worker; He must be such a Lord and Savior for us that we can truthfully say of Him: I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord who was born, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead and thereby has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, from all my sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, and made me His own in life and all eternity. I must not only hope that of Jesus, or think it true or probable or possible, but I must *believe* it, that is, *make it mine* in undoubting faith. Yes, the two greatest letters in the alphabet are the letters *m* and *y*. But it is only God's Holy Spirit that works such appropriating faith in us through the Word of Jesus, through the Gospel. Let us ever open our hearts to its sweet teachings, and we shall then joyfully say with Thomas to Jesus: My Lord and my God.

He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend,
He lives and loves me to the end;
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King!

He lives, all glory to His name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
O the sweet joy this sentence gives,
"I know that my Redeemer lives!"

May 1.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. *Ps. 126, 5. 6.*

“How,” says one, “shall God wipe away my tears in heaven if I shed none on earth? And how shall I reap in joy if I sow not in tears? I was born with tears and I shall die with tears; and why, then, should I live without them in this vale of tears?” But mark the words of the psalmist. He does not say: They that sow tears — as if the tears in themselves were precious seed. It is a vain hope many entertain who think, because they suffered so much here, God is in duty bound to reward them with everlasting joy there. But no! Not the tears, but the sowing is what decides the matter. He that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, bitter tears, and sorrow. “Tears are not always fruitful; their hot drops Sometimes but scorch the cheek and dim the eye; Despairing murmurs over blackened hopes, Not the meek spirit’s calm and chastened cry!” To him, however, who engages in “God’s husbandry,” who sows seeds for eternity, who earnestly strives to save himself and others, to him a joyful harvest is promised. He must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. He will sow tears of repentance over his own sins and the sins of his fellow-men. He will sow in prayerful weeping, often seeking God’s face for help and comfort in his sorrows. He will sow in tears of burning longing to be delivered from this present evil world and to be at home with the Lord. As his sowing was in tears, so his reaping shall be in joy. In heaven his eyes shall see that his believing and tearful praying and laboring for Christ were not in vain, but ripened into bountiful sheaves of eternal joy and peace and bliss that knows no end. Then shall he be like them that dream, and his mouth shall be filled with laughter and his tongue with everlasting praise.

Yonder in joy the sheaves we bring,
Whose seed was sown on earth in tears;
There in our Father’s house we sing
The song too sweet for mortal ears.
Sorrow and sighing all are past,
And pain and death are fled at last;
There with the Lamb of God we dwell,
He leads us to the crystal river,
He wipes away our tears forever;
What there is ours no tongue can tell.

May 2.

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. *1 John 5, 4.*

To be born of God means to be born for battle, but also for victory and triumph. Who is born of God? John tells us in the first verse of this chapter: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ," that is, the God-ordained Savior of the world and therefore *his* Savior, such a one is "born of God." It matters not if such a believer's faith is as small as a grain of mustard-seed or as weak as a bruised reed or a smoking flax; so long as it is true faith in Christ, it is battling and victorious faith, faith that overcometh the world. For it brings with it God's Holy Spirit, who not only kindles such faith in us, but also keeps us in it and strengthens it. In faith we who mourn and grieve over our sins find pardon for them in Christ, our Redeemer. In faith we break with the world and flee its sinful lusts and pleasures. In faith we resist the temptations of the Wicked One. In faith we daily and earnestly pray for grace and power to lead a godly life. In faith we bear our cross, crucify our evil flesh, and, though overcome in a weak hour and fallen into sin, arise again, even as did David and Peter, by Christ's saving mercy, and return to the good fight of faith with greater earnestness. Though often the fight seemingly waxes too hot, endures too long, and we fear that we must finally succumb in the battle,—*courage!* for we are not fighting alone. Christ, the great Captain of our salvation, is fighting for us and with us; and so we can be sure of gaining the victory. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says our blessed Savior; "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Though we be assailed on all sides, we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Rom. 8, 37. Let us but cling in faith to Him and daily pray with His apostles: "Lord, increase our faith!" For as Luther truly says: "This Scripture-passage is a true touchstone of faith. Where there is true faith, there such fruit, victory, and triumph must follow."

Stand up! — stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armor
And, watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there.

Stand up! — stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next, the victor's song.
To him that overcometh
A crown of life shall be;
He with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally.

May 3.

I am the Good Shepherd. *John 10, 11.*

"I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd." Ezek. 34, 15. 16. 23. This glorious promise of the Old Testament was fulfilled in David's Son and David's Lord, our dear Savior Jesus Christ, who says of Himself: "I am the Good Shepherd." King David was a good shepherd when in his youth he tended the flocks of his father on the hills of Bethlehem and a lion and a bear fell on the sheep and seized one of the helpless little lambs. At the risk of his life, David set after the wild beasts and slew them and rescued the lamb out of their deadly jaws. 1 Sam. 17, 34. 35. But our Savior has done more, infinitely more, for us. He laid down His divine life for us, His wayward and sinful sheep, and at the price of His own precious blood has rescued our immortal souls from the power of everlasting death. Verily, He is the Good Shepherd of our souls, and there is none beside Him. And He is a faithful Shepherd, tenderly watching over His blood-bought sheep, providing for their daily wants, healing their wounded souls, defending them by night and day against all prowling foes, keeping them safe and unharmed in the fold, His holy Christian Church. Let others refuse to own Him as the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, we will own Him and follow Him and gratefully sing His sweet praises here on earth until He leads us into the fold of His singing saints above.

Jesus is our Shepherd,
Well we know His voice;
How the gentlest whisper
Makes our hearts rejoice!
Even when He chideth,
Tender is His tone,
None but He shall guide us;
We are His alone.

Jesus is our Shepherd;
Guarded by His arm,
Though the wolves may raven,
None can do us harm;

When we tread death's valley,
Dark with fearful gloom,
We will fear no evil,
Victors o'er the tomb.

Jesus is our Shepherd;
With His goodness now
And His tender mercy
He doth us endow!
Let us sing His praises
With a gladsome heart
Till in heaven we meet Him
Nevermore to part.

May 4.

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. *Ps. 23, 1.*

"The Twenty-third Psalm is the nightingale of psalms. It is small, of homely feather, singing shyly out of obscurity; but, oh! it has filled the air of the whole world with melodious joy, greater than the heart can conceive. Blessed be the day on which that psalm was born! It has charmed more griefs to rest than all the philosophy of the world. It has remanded to their dark dungeon more felon-thoughts, more black doubts, more thieving sorrow than there are sands on the seashore. It has comforted the noble host of the poor. It has sung courage to the army of the disappointed. It has poured balm and consolation into the hearts of the sick, of captives in their dungeons, of widows in their pinching griefs, of orphans in their loneliness. Dying soldiers have died easier as it was read to them; ghastly hospitals have been illumined. It has visited the prisoner and broken his chains and, like Peter's angel, led him forth in imagination and sung him back home again. . . . Nor is its work done. It will go on singing to your children and my children, and to their children, through all generations of time; nor will it fold its wings till the last pilgrim is safe and time ended; and then it shall fly back to the bosom of God, whence it issued, and sound on, mingled with all those sounds of celestial joy which make heaven musical forever." Can each of us say of the Lord Jesus, who calls Himself the Good Shepherd: He is *my* Shepherd? Whoever has been called by Him into His fold and is fed and led by Him can truthfully say: Jesus is my Shepherd, and I am His sheep, His lamb. He can then also truthfully declare: "I shall not want"; for the Lord, my Shepherd, is the almighty God, merciful and gracious, with whom nothing is impossible, who will never, never let His blood-bought sheep die of want, but will deliver it from all trouble and show unto it His glorious salvation.

The Lord my Shepherd is,
I shall be well supplied;
Since He is mine, and I am His,
What can I want beside?

He leads me to the place
Where heavenly pasture grows,
Where living waters gently pass,
And full salvation flows.

If e'er I go astray,
He doth my soul reclaim,
And guides me in His own right way
For His most holy name.

May 5.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. *Ps.* 23, 2.

Let us picture to ourselves an Eastern shepherd with his long staff in hand, leading his flock out to pasture. He does not drive his sheep forward with harsh words or cruel blows, but goes before them, calling to them in his well-known voice, and the trustful sheep gladly follow him. The fierce summer sun has parched and withered all vegetation on the surrounding hills; but the good shepherd knows a smiling, distant valley, where the cool shadows play and the grass is ever fresh and green from the reviving moisture that constantly arises from the quiet pools of living water with which the valley abounds. The road to the valley is hot and dusty and often leads over stony paths and past dangerous cliffs and thorny thickets; but at last the valley is reached, and now the panting sheep can slake their thirst at the sparkling fountains or browse contentedly on the luxuriant grass or stretch their weary limbs in peaceful rest under the watchful eye of their faithful and protecting shepherd. What a delightful scene! But in it we have a charming picture of the loving care and protection with which our Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, ever provides for the wants of His sheep, His believing and devout followers. They often grow faint and weary under the burdensome tasks of life. The way to the Better Land often seems so long and beset with so many difficulties and dangers. Their souls grow sad and depressed, and they long for higher, better things, for eternal joy and peace and happiness. All the pleasure resorts of the world cannot satisfy their longing, all the boasted wisdom of the world is but a polluted fountain at which they cannot still the burning thirst of their soul crying out for God, for the living God. Then they hear the loving Shepherd-voice of their Savior calling to them: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; and in His blessed Word, at the open fountain of His pardoning and comforting grace, they find the soul-reviving food and drink for which they longed.

The Lord my pasture shall prepare
And feed me with a shepherd's care;
His presence shall my wants supply
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noonday walks He shall attend
And all my midnight hours defend.

May 6.

He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. *Ps.* 23, 3.

"I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." Thus David declares in *Ps.* 37. From these words we see that the Good Shepherd provides also for the bodily wants of His sheep. In the days of His flesh a few barley loaves and fishes under His blessed hands sufficed to feed thousands in the wilderness. So He to-day can so multiply and increase the small income, the meager provisions, of His followers that they have bread enough and to spare. Whoever puts his trust in Him and walks obediently in His paths shall not want any good thing. *Ps.* 34, 10. But greater than the wants of our body are the wants of our immortal soul. Our Good Shepherd gave His life for His sheep, and we now have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of all our sins. Yet does sin still cling to us and often wound us on our way to our heavenly home. And, oh! how it hurts our souls to know that we have again broken our pledge of love to our dear Savior by reason of the weakness of our flesh or the temptations of the wicked world. But in His unwearying grace and mercy our blessed Savior "restores our souls" by the sweet assurances of His pardoning love in His holy Gospel and Sacraments and so instils into us new courage and new strength to follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. He leads us in the paths of righteousness through His good Spirit. But will He not at last grow weary of pardoning and helping us if we fall and stumble so often? Never! For He leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Not for any goodness or worthiness in us does He deal so mercifully with us and finally save us, but for His great mercy's sake. His name is Jesus, that is, Savior; and as such He will glorify Himself also in us. Then let us give ourselves entirely into His saving hands and obediently follow His guiding Shepherd-voice, and we can trustfully pray and say:—

Jesus, still lead on,
Till our rest be won;
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless;
Guide us by Thy hand
To our Fatherland.

If the way be drear,
If the foe be near,
Let not faithless fear o'ertake us,
Let not faith and hope forsake us;
For through many a woe
To our home we go.

May 7.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. *Ps. 23, 4.*

What unflinching trust and whole-hearted confidence David here displays in the wise and loving guidance of his Savior even in the dark days of adversity! Ought we not always to do the same? It is true, when the Good Shepherd leads us into the dark valley of grief and sorrow and the shadows grow darker and longer and no golden sunbeam pierces the tearful gloom, then our hearts cry out in fear: "The Lord hath forsaken me. The Good Shepherd hath forgotten me." But what weakness of faith that is! How can we think so when we have the pledge of our Savior: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"? He is with us in the dark valley. He has numbered the very hairs of our head. How, then, *can* any evil befall us? And His rod and His staff, His blessed Word, comforts us so lovingly, so mightily in all our afflictions and bereavements. For in His Word He gives us this promise: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." *Is. 43, 1.* "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." *Is. 49, 15.* And so it is when we approach the last dark valley our feet must tread, the valley of death. How our poor, weak flesh does dread the thought of death and the grave! But why? When our dying hour comes and father and mother and all the world forsake us, He will be with us who has conquered death and brought life and immortality to light. Even death cannot separate us from Him and His saving love. We have His pledge; and heaven and earth shall pass away, but not that glorious pledge of His: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." *John 10, 27, 28.*

Though in the paths of death we tread,
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For Thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly crook shall give me aid
And guide me through the dreadful shade.

May 8.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Ps. 23, 5.

The Good Shepherd, who guides and protects His sheep so faithfully, is also their loving Host. He prepares a table before them in the very presence of their enemies. We know these cunning and malevolent enemies. They are the old Evil Foe, the alluring world, our own sin-corrupted flesh. Against them we must daily fight and pray; for they daily seek to seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice. But in our conflict with them our Good Shepherd is with us, and He prepares a table for us in His precious Gospel and His blessed Sacrament of the Altar, where we can eat of the rich viands of His grace and gain new strength and courage for the conflict, while our enemies look on and gnash their teeth in impotent rage, because they cannot prevent it nor get us into their power. The Good Shepherd is too mighty for them. He will not suffer them to touch a single hair of His trusting sheep. His love for His blood-bought sheep is so great and bountiful that He not only feeds them at the table of His grace, but also anoints them with oil, that is, fills them with His Holy Spirit, who leads them into all truth and glorifies the matchless love of their Savior before their eyes to such a degree that their cup of joy runneth over and their adoring souls break out in the rapturous song:—

The King of Love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

And so through all the length of days,
Thy goodness faileth never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house forever!

May 9.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. *Ps. 23, 6.*

The nightingale among the psalms ends her sweet song with a thrilling climax, extolling the unfailing, changeless love and mercy of the Good Shepherd toward His trusting sheep. He is and ever remains the same tender and solicitous Savior, Christ Jesus, yesterday and to-day and forever. Changeful years may come and go, but His compassions fail not, they are new every morning, and great is His faithfulness. Through all the varying scenes of this transient life, through days of smiling sunshine, days of darkest storm and stress, to our very last expiring breath, His goodness and mercy shall follow us like two guardian angels, as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." His changeless goodness shall supply all our wants, His changeless mercy blot out all our sins. Let the future loom ever so dark and forbidding, we can rest secure in our Savior's changeless love, even as a child in its mother's arms. And that is an indisputable fact, not an idle dream, not a mere poetic fancy, but God's very truth; for it is divinely established in the eternal, changeless character of our blessed Savior. Hence the psalmist sings with such sublime confidence: "*Surely* goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life"; and now adds as his last jubilant note: "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Though a pilgrim and a stranger in a hostile world, where unseen dangers and lurking enemies surround me, I have a sure place of refuge, where my soul can dwell in safety, the house of my Lord, His Temple, His holy Christian Church, where He resides in the fulness of His saving grace, "daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise up me and all the dead and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. *This is most certainly true!*" O blessed the man who can truly sing with David: "The Lord is *my* shepherd; I shall not want!"

Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
 Much we need Thy tend'rest care;
 In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,
 For our use Thy folds prepare.
 Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
 Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.

May 10.

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold [flock] and one Shepherd. *John 10, 16.*

These are the last words of the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, with its wonderfully rich comfort. Jesus had there described Himself as the one Good Shepherd, as the only One to whom that designation applied in its full and unrestricted meaning. For what is the chief characteristic of a good shepherd? A good shepherd, says Christ, lays down his life for his sheep. In this one virtue the Lord includes all that men expect from a faithful shepherd. He thus indicates not only that He gained redemption for all men by laying down His life for them, but He also points out the nature of His kingdom and the character of His subjects, as though He would say: My government consists in this, that I rule My sheep, that is, the poor and miserable people on earth who have accepted Me as their Shepherd, having learned to know that there is neither counsel nor help for them elsewhere. This He spoke not only of the Jews, but of all men; for He expressly states that He has also other sheep which He wants to bring into His flock.—Some men have understood and explained this text as though its fulfilment would take place shortly before the Last Day, after Antichrist had been revealed. Then, they taught and do teach to this day, all strife in religious matters will cease, all men will be brought into the one great visible fold, or sheep-pen, of the Church, where Christ shall reign visibly among His adoring people in great, divine peace and glory. But it is not true, as the Millennialists will have it, that all men will become Christians. By such doctrine the Word of the Gospel is darkened, and men are lulled to sleep in a false security. What our Lord means to say is this: He has His sheep not only in the fold of the Jews, but also among the heathen, and these He must bring to His flock, to His Church, by means of His voice, that is, by means of His converting and saving Gospel. Thus there will be one Christian congregation, or Church, the communion of saints, one faith, one love, one hope, one Baptism. That is the flock which the Lord has in mind, and to that flock every poor sinner belongs who has accepted Christ and believes in Him as His only Savior.

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the Word;

From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

May 11.

A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father. *John 16, 16.*

These were dark, mysterious words to the disciples of our Lord when they heard them from their Master's lips in that sad and solemn night in which He began His great suffering. We hear them questioning among themselves what these words could mean and declaring: "We cannot tell what He saith!" But they soon learned to understand the mysterious saying. In a little while, sooner than they had dreamed, their beloved Master was taken from them and nailed to the cross and laid in His grave, and their joy and hope was buried with Him. Then they did not see Him. But in a few short days, "in a little while," He returns to them in triumph from the grave, and their sorrow is turned into inexpressible joy. Now they understood the words, "A little while," and, "I go to the Father." But does not this experience of the first disciples repeat itself in the life of every Christian soul? There are times when a Christian does not see His loving Lord, when he sees nothing but his great guilt and sin and is filled with fear of death and the Judgment to come, and it seems as if Jesus, his Savior, had given him up to despair and condemnation. Like weeping Mary at the tomb of her risen Lord, we do not see Him then, though He stand before us in His blessed Word. But "in a little while" our eyes are opened, and our risen Lord shows us His wounded hands and feet, that is, we again joyfully recognize Him as our Redeemer, who has gone through suffering and death for our sake and saved us from sin and now is gone to the Father to prepare a place for us. Then we cry out with Mary in ecstasy of soul, "Rabboni," which is to say, Master; and grace and peace and heavenly joy again fill our sorrowing hearts.

Why should sorrow ever grieve me?
Christ is near, What can here
E'er of Him deprive me?
Who can rob me of my heaven
That God's Son As my own
To my faith hath given?

May 12.

And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. *John 16, 22, 32.*

Yes, the disciples were filled with deep sorrow when Jesus told them that He would soon part from them. Ever and again He reminds them of that sad parting hour. But He also cheers and comforts them with the sweet assurance: "We shall meet again!" And when they did meet again on that never-to-be-forgotten joyous Easter morning, all their sorrow vanished, and overwhelming rapture filled their hearts. The happiness of that meeting went with them through all their subsequent life, comforted and strengthened them in all their trials and sufferings, until they entered into the joy of their Lord and saw Him again face to face in His Father's house above. What a joyous meeting that must have been! We all, as followers of our Lord, must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven. We therefore also meet with much sorrow in this world. And the parting hour is bitter, oh, so bitter, when death comes and takes our loved ones from us. Then all the sympathy, all the wisdom, all the pleasures of the world, afford no abiding comfort. But this sweet promise of our Lord: "I will see you again," can and does turn our sorrow into joy and heals the bleeding wounds of our grief-torn hearts. It assures us that our parting at the grave will not be forever. When we see our blessed Lord, we shall at the same time see with Him all our loved ones who have gone before. On that day we shall ask Him nothing; then all the dark riddles of life will lie clear and bright before us like an open book. Then no man shall take our joy from us. There shall be no more parting, nor weeping, nor longing, nor lonesome days and nights; for we shall then be at home with Jesus.

There is a blessed home
Beyond this land of woe,
Where trials never come
Nor tears of sorrow flow;
Where faith is lost in sight
And patient hope is crowned
And everlasting light
Its glory throws around.

Look up, ye saints of God,
Nor fear to tread below
The path your Savior trod
Of daily toil and woe.
Wait but a little while
In uncomplaining love;
His own most gracious smile
Shall welcome you above.

May 13.

Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. *Luke 14, 27.*

If Holy Scriptures contained no other passages to expose clearly the dangerous doctrines held by the so-called Christian Scientists, this single passage would do so. In it Christ calls every man who would be His disciple into the fellowship of suffering. As Christians we must not only be willing to suffer all manner of afflictions, but we must suffer them patiently and in submission to God's will, even as our Lord Jesus did before us. But this the Christian Science people refuse to do. They deny the reality of pain and disease because they deny the reality of sin. In doing so, they also brazenly deny the atoning love of our Savior which prompted Him to die for our sins and save us from their guilt and punishment. Again, when our Savior in the days of His flesh healed all manner of sickness among the people, Matt. 4, 23, He did not play the juggler, but cured real maladies, removed real pain, and thus showed Himself a real Savior from sin and all its consequences. Trusting in His mighty love and power, we can look up to Him in days of sickness with the trustful prayer: "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick," and know that He will not let us suffer one moment longer than is good for our temporal and eternal welfare. But all this Christian hope and comfort is destroyed by the teachings of Christian Scientists. These people declare all pain and sickness to be only imaginary, denounce what the Bible says about sin and its evil results, and use prayer as a sort of *magic* to make themselves immune against all bodily infirmities. They refuse to bear the cross of sickness, though our Lord Jesus in His work as Savior took on Himself our infirmities and bore our sicknesses, Matt. 8, 17, and thus they read themselves out of the discipleship of Christ, are not Christian, but unchristian, and we must beware of their soul-destroying doctrine that nowadays has poisoned the minds of many.

O Thou, from whom all goodness flows,
I lift my heart to Thee;
In all my sorrows, conflicts, woes,
Dear Lord, remember me!

If worn with pain, disease, and grief
This feeble frame should be,
Grant patience, rest, and kind relief;
Hear and remember me!

May 14.

It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. *John 16, 7.*

It was as necessary for our Lord Jesus to leave the world and to return to His Father as it was for Him to have come from the Father into the world. If He had not come into the world and assumed our flesh and blood when the time was fulfilled, He could not have accomplished His blessed work of our redemption. If He had not returned to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit with the Gospel into the world, the world would know nothing of its Redeemer and Savior. On Pentecost the Holy Ghost came to the disciples with His miraculous gifts and endowed them with the wisdom, zeal, and courage which they needed to preach the Gospel of the crucified Savior in all the then known languages of the world. To us the Holy Ghost comes with His *converting* and *sanctifying* gifts in the Gospel; and it is expedient, very good and necessary, that He thus comes to us; for we must all confess with Luther in the explanation of the Third Article: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, his Lord and Savior, but by the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor. 12, 3. Let us therefore thank the Savior for the precious gift of the Holy Ghost and let us earnestly pray Him, particularly during the season of Pentecost, to shed His Holy Spirit more and more abroad in our hearts that we may grow in faith and grace and all spiritual gifts.

Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed
His tender, last farewell,
A Guide, a Comforter, bequeathed
With us to dwell.

He came sweet influence to impart,
A gracious, willing Guest,
While He can find one humble heart
Wherein to rest.

And every virtue we possess
And every victory won
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone.

Spirit of purity and grace,
Our weakness, pitying, see;
Oh, make our hearts Thy dwelling-place
And meet for Thee!

May 15.

He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. *John 16, 14.*

Here the Lord Jesus tells His apostles in what the work of the promised Holy Spirit would consist, namely, in glorifying Him, making Him, the world's only Savior and Redeemer, precious and glorious before the eyes and hearts of men by means of the holy Gospel. And that is what the Holy Ghost does and will do to the end of time. He speaks not of Himself, brings no new doctrine, no new revelations outside of, or contrary to, what our Lord Jesus has taught us. He speaks only those things that serve to make the person and the work and the great redeeming love of our Savior clearer and holier and dearer to us, so that, like the apostles on the Mount of Transfiguration, we see no one save Jesus only as the Hope of our salvation. Here, then, we have an unfailing touchstone by means of which we can soon detect any false doctrine or false teacher. The Apostle John warns us and all Christians: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4, 1. All about us we hear such false prophets preaching their soul-destroying false doctrines; and what makes them so dangerous is that they come to us in sheep's clothing, seem so pious and sincere and so eager to teach nothing but the saving truth. Alas, so many blood-bought souls become their victims, because they do not make the Word of Christ alone their guide and shield. But let us learn that every doctrine is false and therefore harmful to our immortal soul which does not in every instance give all glory for our redemption, conversion, and salvation alone to Christ Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior, God's very Son, made manifest in the flesh.

Holy Ghost, with light divine
Shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away,
Turn the darkness into day.

Let me see my Savior's face,
Let me all His beauties trace;
Show those glorious truths to me
Which are only known to Thee.

May 16.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. *2 Cor. 4, 17. 18.*

These precious words are not true of every affliction, but only of the affliction endured by those who “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen”; in other words, they are true only in the case of believing Christians. For faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things *not seen*. Heb. 11, 1. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. Lifting up our eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help, joyfully believing the unfailing promise of our dear Savior concerning the many mansions in His Father’s house, where He has prepared a place for us also, we can patiently endure all the trials and tribulations that come to us, knowing that they are but “temporal” and will soon pass away. Do we at times think our afflictions are too many and are enduring too long? Let us compare them with the eternal glory that awaits us; then they will seem light to us because they endure “but for a moment.” All our afflictions have a blessed purpose. They are sent by our heavenly Father to work for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” They serve to purge and cleanse our hearts from the love of sin, as Peter declares: “For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” 1 Pet. 4, 1. 2. And do not our troubles drive us to prayer, to giving up the world and the lusts thereof and to seeking more earnestly the kingdom of God and His righteousness? So we have all reason to thank God even for our afflictions that work for us an eternal weight of glory.

O what are all my sufferings here,
If, Lord, Thou count me meet
With that enraptured host t’appear
And worship at Thy feet!
Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away,
But let me find them all again
In that eternal day.

May 17.

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. *Ps. 130, 1—4.*

Luther calls this 130th Psalm a Pauline psalm, seeing that it contains the great apostle's inspiring doctrine of justification by grace through faith. It was a great favorite with Luther, who, in 1523, composed his famous hymn of similar title upon it. Sung to Luther's matchless tune and verse, this psalm has been a source of untold blessing to millions and millions of penitent and believing hearts. The contrite heart, agonizing in the depths of fear and woe over its sins, as did Luther, can have no greater or more blessed experience than is expressed in the words: "There is forgiveness with Thee." Self-righteous people know nothing of such consoling experience. While quick to see the faults in others, they are generally blind to their own sins and seek to build ladders to heaven by their supposed good works and virtues. And when they must admit that they have sinned, they endeavor to get rid of their sins by forgetting them or by making light of them. Vain and foolish undertaking! The righteous and holy God cannot be deceived by such hypocrisy. Only he is happy who can truthfully say: "There is forgiveness with Thee, O Lord; and in Thy great mercy Thou hast also forgiven my sin." But such forgiving grace is also sanctifying grace. A man who has experienced the forgiving mercy of his God in Christ cannot and will not live in conscious vice and sin, but he will daily fold his hands and pray with David, in the 19th Psalm: "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

Out of the depths I cry to Thee,
Lord, hear my lamentation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me
And grant my supplication;
For if Thou fix Thy searching eye
On all sin and iniquity,
Who, Lord, can stand before Thee?

But love and grace with Thee prevail,
O God, our sins forgiving;
The best and holiest deeds must fail
Of all before Thee living;
Before Thee none can boasting stand,
But all must fear Thy strict demand
And live alone by mercy.

May 18.

There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God. Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest. *Heb. 4, 9, 11.*

Yes, there remaineth yet a rest!
Arise, sad heart, that darkly pines,
By heavy care and pain opprest,
On whom no sun of gladness shines;
Look to the Lamb! In yon bright fields
Thoul't know the joy His presence yields.
Cast off thy load and thither haste;
Soon shalt thou fight and bleed no more,
Soon, soon thy weary course be o'er,
And deep the rest thou then shalt taste.

The rest appointed thee by God,
The rest that naught shall break or move,
That ere this earth by man was trod
Was set apart for thee by Love.
Our Savior gave His life to win
This rest for thee; O enter in!
Hear how His voice sounds far and wide,
Ye weary souls, no more delay,
Loiter not faithless by the way,
Here in My peace and rest abide!

Ye heavy-laden, come to Him!
Ye who are bent with many a load,
Come from your prisons drear and dim,
Toil thus not sadly on your road!
Ye've borne the burden of the day,
And hear ye not the Savior say:
"I am your Refuge and your Rest?"
His children ye, of heavenly birth,
Howe'er may rage sin, hell, or earth,
Here ye are safe, here calmly blest.

"Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest." How? We are told very plainly that the children of Israel failed to reach the Promised Land with its sweet rest from their weary wanderings because of their *unbelief*. Let us, therefore, sincerely believe the promises of our God concerning the blessed rest provided for His children in heaven, and let us walk in His paths and follow His guidance in childlike obedience, and we shall come to the everlasting rest of the saints in heaven, when our pilgrim days in the wilderness of this world are over.

There is untroubled calm and light,
No gnawing care shall mar our rest.
Ye weary, heed this word aright,
Come, lean upon your Savior's breast.
Fain would I linger here no more,
Fain to yon happier world upsoar
And join that bright, expectant band.
O raise, my soul, the joyful song
That rings through yon triumphant throng;
Thy perfect rest is nigh at hand.

May 19.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. *John 16, 23.*

With a double holy assurance our Lord here gives us the glorious promise that whatsoever we pray for in His name, our heavenly Father will grant it. How this blessed promise ought to incite us to constant and *confident prayer!* Would we not be giving the holy and truthful God the lie direct if, in the face of this sacredly attested promise of His, we would doubt the efficacy of our prayer when offered in the name of His dear Son? But what does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? It means not to rely on our goodness and worthiness, not even on our fervency when praying, but in simple faith to trust in the all-sufficient and saving merit of Jesus Christ. By nature we are sinners, and the just and holy God cannot and will not hear the prayers of unforgiven sinners. But when we believe in Jesus as our Savior, we have found forgiveness in Him, and for His sake we have at all times access to the throne of mercy; for His sake God always hears our prayers. But when we thus pray in the name of Jesus, we must also pray according to the will of Jesus, that is, we must subject our will to His holy will in all things that we ask for. That includes that we deny ourselves as He demands, that we live in no conscious sin, that we take our cross upon ourselves and follow the example He has left us. Any one living in disobedience to His holy will, in love of the world, in works of the flesh, cannot acceptably pray to God. He who would call on the name of the Lord must depart from *all* iniquity. Finally, to pray in the name of Jesus means to pray in firm confidence, never doubting that we are heard. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." But who would not joyfully believe that his prayers are heard when Jesus assures him with a double, solemn oath that they are heard, as He does in our glorious text?

When thus my heart in prayer ascendeth
Through Thine own Holy Spirit unto Thee,
Thy heart, O Father, kindly bendeth
Its fervent love and favor unto me,
Rejoicing my petition to fulfil
Which I have made according to Thy will.

And what Thy Spirit thus hath taught me
To seek from Thee must needs be such a prayer
As Thou wilt grant, through Him who bought me,
And raised me up to be Thy child and heir.
In Jesus' name I fearless seek Thy face
And take from Thee, my Father, grace for grace.

May 20.

Our Father, who art in heaven. *Matt. 6, 9.*

With what reverent and fervent joy we ought to pray the Lord's Prayer, the prayer taught us by the loving and holy lips of our Lord Jesus Christ! How rich and blessed that prayer will always make us if we really *pray* it and not merely *say* it! What danger, what loss, what calamity, need we fear if the almighty and everlasting God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Giver of *every* good gift, is *our* Father through our Lord Jesus Christ? He is in heaven, high above all earthly fathers, not subject to their infirmities, not limited in His power and love as they are, but able to *do* exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Just stop to think what it means to have *God's* eyes watching over you, *God's* hands protecting and guiding you, *God's* heart loving and cherishing you with everlasting love! Then you are not alone and forsaken in this poor world, though you have no other friend beside. He is an omnipresent God and Father, and wherever you are, whatever your trouble or woe, you can go to Him and pour out your aching heart on His loving bosom and be comforted with divine and abiding comfort. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!" But let us never forget that we owe this royal privilege alone to our Lord Jesus Christ. He, our elder Brother, won back for us the heart of God when we had lost it through our sinful disobedience. He alone has secured for us the right confidently to approach the just and holy God with the prayer, "Our Father." "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," He says. So no non-Christian can pray the Lord's Prayer. He may *say* it, but he cannot *pray* it. God says to him: Take away from Me the noise of thy empty words. I will not hear thy vain babble! "For he that hath not the Son hath not the Father that sent Him." Let that solemn truth ever warn us from joining in prayer with men who deny the truth as it is in Jesus.

Dear heavenly Father, we poor sinners confess unto Thee that we are not worthy to be called Thy sons and daughters. We approach Thee, not trusting in our own righteousness, but relying on the merit and righteousness of Thy beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In His name we ask Thee to grant us Thy Holy Spirit that He may cry in us, "Abba, Father," and we may ever ask Thee for all things we need in body and soul with all boldness and confidence, as dear children ask their dear father. Amen.

May 21.

Hallowed be Thy name. *Matt. 6, 9.*

What is the true purpose of our life in this world and in the world to come? The Lord Jesus tells us in this First Petition: to hallow the name of our Father who is in heaven. All creation has but that one purpose: to glorify and exalt the great and holy name of God. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Rom. 11, 36. It is doubly our duty, because we are not only created by our heavenly Father, but also redeemed from sin and death and wrath by the blood of His Son. "Ye are bought with a price," says Paul, 1 Cor. 6, 20; "therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." How often we forget this sacred duty and compel God to complain of us: "A son honoreth his father and a servant his master. If, then, I be a Father, where is Mine honor? And if I be a Master, where is My fear?" Mal. 1, 6. Verily, this petition humbles us deeply before our heavenly Father and compels us to ask fervently and sincerely: "Help us, Thy weak children, O Father in heaven, to hallow Thy great and blessed name!" When do we hallow it? The Catechism says very happily: "When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead a holy life according to it." In His holy Word the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, God has revealed His saving name to us. To detract from its truth, to prove indifferent to its purity and corrupt it by false, human doctrine, is to profane and blaspheme the great and holy God Himself. What a terrible sin! Again, what a terrible sin it is to claim that you are a Christian, even to boast of your orthodox faith, and then to dishonor your Father in heaven by an unchristian, godless life! It is true we cannot keep God's name absolutely pure and holy while in this sinful flesh. Even the holy Apostle Paul is compelled to confess: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." But if we be true children of God, we shall daily strive after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Therefore let us pray: —

Dear heavenly Father, Thy name is, indeed, holy in itself; we cannot add to its stainless purity and sanctity or detract from it. But we pray Thee, help us in Thy great mercy to hold and keep it sacred among us and our children. Let us never use Thy holy name in vain. Let us never dishonor Thee by teaching, believing, or living otherwise than Thy holy Word teaches. Forgive where in thought, word, or deed we have sinned against Thy holy name. We ask it for Jesus sake. Amen.

May 22.

Thy kingdom come. *Matt. 6, 10.*

The kingdom of God for which the old patriarchs and prophets hoped and prayed so longingly in their day was established by our blessed Lord and Savior when He came into the world and performed His glorious work of redemption. From Him we know what manner of kingdom it is: not a kingdom of this world, but a heavenly, spiritual kingdom, where He rules in the hearts of men with His saving Gospel. It comes not with outward show, consists not in meat or drink, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is a universal kingdom, stretching from pole to pole, over all lands and isles and peoples. And it is an everlasting kingdom, against which even the gates of hell shall not prevail. Through this kingdom all its faithful subjects enter into the Kingdom of Glory, there "To be free from pain and sorrow And the anxious, dread to-morrow, To rest in light and sunshine In the presence of the King." Blessed are all they who are the children of grace, the sure heirs of glory in this kingdom of God. Natural man knows nothing of it, nor cares for it, but despises and rejects it when told about it. It is alone God's Holy Spirit who brings sinful men into this blessed kingdom by means of Christ's saving Gospel and the Sacraments. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We all were brought into this kingdom when we were baptized. Are we still in it, and is God's kingdom still in us? If so, oh, then we know what bliss it is to be loving and obedient children of our heavenly Father; then nothing will be so dear to our hearts as His blessed kingdom. Then we shall be glad to spread His kingdom among all the inhabitants of this sin-ruined earth; we shall know no greater and holier joy than to support God's *mission cause* with our prayers, our gifts, our very lives. Let us pray:

Dear heavenly Father, we praise and glorify Thy holy name for delivering us from the power of darkness and translating us into the kingdom of Thy dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and are made children of Thy saving grace and heirs of Thy everlasting glory. O we pray Thee, as Thy kingdom has come to us, let it come also to all our perishing fellow-men who still sit in the darkness of unbelief and sin and death. Make us ever willing to spread Thy saving Gospel at home and abroad and grant to all those who labor in Thy harvest-fields, especially to all our dear missionaries, Thy Holy Spirit's aid and comfort that they may never weary of telling dying sinners of Thy saving love and mercy in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

May 23.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. *Matt. 6, 10.*

Our heavenly Father wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth as revealed in His blessed Word. But that unholy alliance, the devil, the world, and our flesh, continually opposes this good and gracious will of His and seeks to prevent His kingdom from coming to us and abiding within us. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Without our heavenly Father's gracious help not one of us can escape the schemes of these powerful and deadly enemies of our souls. Let us daily and sincerely, but also confidently, ask Him to break and hinder their evil counsel against us that we may never do their will, but always His holy will, even as it is done in heaven, where the angels gladly and unhesitatingly carry out His commands. So our will ought to conform at all times to the will of our heavenly Father. Gladly, willingly, we ought to obey His command to resist the devil, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to crucify our flesh with the lusts thereof, and to lead a holy life in all godliness and honesty. And it is furthermore His good and gracious will that we take upon ourselves unresistingly the crosses and afflictions He sends us for our good; for all things must work together for good to them that love God. No cross, no crown! How hard it is for us sincerely to pray in our trials, especially when they prove so sore and long: "Thy will, O heavenly Father, not mine, be done!" Yet it is just in these sore trials by which our Father in heaven corrects us that we learn not to hold ourselves without sin and guilt, but to seek His pardoning grace and saving kingdom the more earnestly and effectually.

Dear heavenly Father, Thy will is good and gracious toward us, even when in Thy wisdom and love Thou dost afflict us. We pray Thee, help us to submit willingly to Thine all-wise dispensations; break and hinder the will of the devil, the world, and our own rebellious flesh and strengthen and preserve us steadfast in Thy holy Word and saving faith unto the end, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

May 24.

Give us this day our daily bread. *Matt. 6, 11.*

If we short-sighted mortals had formulated the Lord's Prayer, we undoubtedly would have placed this request for our daily bread at the head and would most probably have forgotten to mention the other petitions. In our deplorable natural blindness we are all more vitally concerned about earthly things than about heavenly things, caring more for our bodies than we do for our immortal souls. But the way our blessed Lord arranges the petitions teaches us again that we are always to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; then all the things we need for the support of this body and life shall be given us by our heavenly Father, who knows that we have need of these things. They are all included by our Lord in the words "our daily bread." While our heavenly Father gives these material things also to the wicked, we, His redeemed and loving children, are to ask Him for them as dear children ask their dear father. We are to say: *Give*, and thereby to confess our utter dependence on His goodness and mercy. *Us* we are to say and thereby to include the wants of our brethren in our prayer and beware of all selfishness and greed. *This day* — avoid all worry about *to-morrow*; for our Father will care for us to-morrow just as readily as He does to-day. We are to pray for *our* bread, that is, bread which we acquire honestly; there must not be a dishonest penny in our hands. And the closing words, "*daily bread*," imply that we ask not for great wealth or riches, but only for the things we need for the support of our body. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." 1 Tim. 6, 8. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, because he forgot to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Dear heavenly Father, Thy blessings are new every morning. As Thou hast cared for our immortal souls, so wilt Thou care also for our poor mortal bodies and graciously supply all our wants. We pray Thee, give us a *grateful* heart to thank Thee at all times for Thy bountiful goodness toward us. Give us a *contented* and *care-free* heart, which cheerfully leaves the ordering of our daily life to Thy loving hands. And give us a *merciful* heart, so that we may willingly share our bread with our hungry brethren and help and befriend them in their bodily needs, even as Thou dost daily help and befriend us. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

May 25.

And forgive us our debts (our trespasses), as we forgive our debtors (those who trespass against us). *Matt. 6, 12.*

The so-called "Holiness" people think they have no need of this petition, for they say they have no sin. 1 John 1, 8—10. A true Christian prays every day: "Forgive us our trespasses," and, moreover, considers this petition the most precious and the sweetest of all; for he knows that in spite of all his earnest striving after holiness he daily sins much and therefore daily needs to be forgiven. So he comes joyfully every day, and as often as he feels his need, to the "Fountain filled with blood Drawn from Immanuel's veins, Where sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains." And what joy and love and gratitude then fills the Christian's heart when the heavenly Father again assures him through His Holy Spirit, saying: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee!" For the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. — But this petition is also the most dangerous petition to pray. For in it we promise our heavenly Father solemnly that out of gratitude for the forgiveness He has granted us we will *heartily* forgive, and *readily* do good to, those who sin against us. Oh, how many stubborn, resentful, and revengeful hearts pray against themselves and invoke God's dreadful wrath upon themselves when praying this petition, because they still hold a grudge against the brother who has offended them or even live in open enmity with him! It is in vain for them to say: "I will forgive, but never forget!" God throws all our sins behind His back and no longer remembers them. So must we forgive, with sincere and loving heart, if we would be forgiven by God. Let us never forget the earnest warning of our Savior recorded Mark 11, 25, 26: "When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. *But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*"

Dear heavenly Father, how could we live one moment without the blessed assurance that Thou hast pardoned all our sins for our dear Savior's sake and that we are now Thy beloved children? Thy Son prayed also for us on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." O we pray Thee, help us through Thy Holy Spirit firmly and joyfully to believe in our pardon with Thee through Thy dear Son, and for His sake gladly to forgive our sinning and erring brethren all their debts, even as Thou hast forgiven us. Amen.

May 26.

And lead us not into temptation. *Matt. 6, 13.*

Says Dr. Luther: "We cannot prevent the birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from building their nests in our hair." In other words, we cannot hinder the devil, the world, and our flesh from tempting us to misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice; but with the help of God we can resist and overcome their evil designs. Our heavenly Father has given us two tried and approved weapons with which to withstand their attacks and to gain the victory over them in every battle. One weapon is prayer. In every temptation let us earnestly and persistently cry to our heavenly Father that He would guard us and keep us from their power; and though we be assailed by them, that He would strengthen us in the fight, so that we may overcome the temptation. The chief weapon of defense is the written Word of God. When our Savior was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, He victoriously beat back every attack of the Prince of this world with the declaration: "It is written." We see how necessary it is for us to know our Bible, that we may have the weapon at hand when suddenly and cunningly tempted by the enemy. And let us never forget that God's Word warns us repeatedly to avoid all *occasions* for sin. Whoever recklessly runs into danger generally perishes in it. Let us heed that warning. You cannot look at the suggestive pictures so often displayed in the "movies"; you cannot read an unclean book, without sullyng your soul; you cannot be a friend of the unbelieving children of the world without denying your Lord. Remember overconfident Peter in the courtyard of the high priest! There is only one safe plan for escaping temptations, and that is: *Run away from them.* When pious Joseph was tempted, he fled; and the holy Apostle John would not stay in the company of the heretic Cerinthus, who denied the divinity of Christ, but at once left the place. "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. 6, 17. 18.

Dear heavenly Father, Thou knowest how we, Thy wayfaring children, are beset by so many enemies in this world's wilderness and have not the power in ourselves to resist them. We pray Thee, therefore, do Thou undertake for us and graciously defend us when they assail us. O help us through Thy Holy Spirit to watch and to pray, lest we fall in these temptations; our spirit, indeed, is willing, but our poor flesh is so weak. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

May 27.

But deliver us from evil. *Matt. 6, 13.*

“We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and, finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.” What a warm response this touching explanation of Luther finds in our hearts when long illness confines us to a bed of suffering, or when old age comes upon us and the shadows grow longer and darker and we long to lay down the weary burden! Then we often grow homesick for heaven and sigh with old Valerius Herberger: “Farewell! I say with gladness, False, evil world, farewell! Thy life is sin and sadness, With thee I would not dwell; In heaven are better pleasures, I long for that bright sphere Where God grants endless treasures To those that served Him here.” It is true, we still have the journey through the dark valley of death before us, and our poor flesh shrinks from its gloomy aspect. But we also have the sure promise: “He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven” — the last, in death — “there shall no evil touch thee.” Dying grace will be given us for our dying day, so that we can confidently say with David: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death,” says our faithful Savior.

Dear heavenly Father, we are Thy pilgrims and strangers here, as our fathers were before us. But we thank Thy great mercy in which Thou hast prepared also for us a rest in Thy blessed home above. O we pray Thee: “Take Thou our hands and lead us O’er life’s rough way, With heavenly manna feed us From day to day.” And: “When our last hour cometh, Fraught with strife and pain, When our dust returneth To the dust again; On Thy truth relying, Through that mortal strife, Father, take us, dying, To eternal life,” for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

May 28.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. *Matt. 6, 13.*

May we really ask our heavenly Father with all holiness and confidence for all the priceless gifts included in these seven petitions? Are we not asking too much for Him to give us? No! While the gifts are beyond all human computation, our heavenly Father can and will grant them; for, in the first place, His is the *kingdom*. He is Lord over all, as David prays so inspiringly, 1 Chron. 29, 11: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all." He is the King, we are His subjects and have the right to seek His help and protection in time of need. Secondly, His is the *power*. There is nothing impossible with Him. Who can withstand His mighty will? So He can grant our petitions, for He has all power in heaven and in earth. Thirdly, His is the *glory*. In hearing the prayers of His children, He manifests His glory, reveals His adorable goodness and power. His is the kingdom and the power and the glory *forever and ever*. He remains the same rich, mighty, and merciful God through all eternity. We can come to Him at all times and find in Him ever the same Lord, rich unto all that call upon Him. Rom. 10, 12. — But does not our experience prove that the Lord at times does *not* answer prayer? Yes, the Lord in His superior wisdom and goodness often does not answer our prayer at the time and in the manner we would like to have Him answer it. But where has any subject the right to dictate to the king how he should comply with his requests? "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to *His will*, He heareth us." 1 John 5, 14. Let us make sure in all our prayers that they are according to our heavenly Father's will, then we can always end them with a bold and confident *Amen*. And that means: "That I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and heard; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen, that is, yea, yea, it shall be so!"

May 29.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." *Matt. 28, 18—20.*

Our risen Savior remained with His disciples forty days and then gave them this great missionary command before He ascended into heaven. While in the form of a servant here on earth, He did not use the divine power given Him after His human nature, but humbled Himself and was obedient to His Father even unto the death of the cross. But now, having finished His great work of redemption, He enters on the full and perpetual exercise of His divine power also after His human nature — for our good, for the salvation of all the world. For all the world He has gained and obtained forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation by His atoning death. Now He commissions His disciples to go into all the world with the glad tidings: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation. Now, then, ye are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God!" 2 Cor. 5, 19. 20. From the Acts of the Apostles and the annals of church history we learn how zealous and faithful the dear apostles showed themselves to fulfil their great commission, how in spite of all persecution, stirred up by Jews and Gentiles, they preached and taught nothing else than what Christ Himself had taught them in His Gospel. If we ask what was the secret of their power, of their success, of their faithfulness unto death, the answer is: Because their ascended and almighty Savior was with them. So He is with all His servants who are faithful to His Word and doctrine. So will He be with us to-day and all the days of our life if we are His in true faith. What greater joy or happiness could we want?

Anywhere with Jesus, says the Christian heart;
Let Him take me where He will, so we do not part;
Always sitting at His feet, there's no cause for fears;
Anywhere with Jesus in this vale of tears.

Anywhere with Jesus, for it cannot be
Dreary, dark, or desolate if He is with me;
He will love me alway, every need supply;
Anywhere with Jesus, should I live or die.

May 30.

And Jesus led them [His disciples] out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. *Luke 24, 50. 51.*

In these days we remember that our Savior ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty to rule with divine power and majesty over all things in heaven and earth. His cross of bitter shame He has now exchanged for the throne of divine glory. Now every tongue in heaven and earth and under the earth must confess that He is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father. But though Jesus withdrew His visible presence from His disciples when He ascended into heaven, He did not leave them comfortless. In parting from them, He lifted up His victorious, faithful hands and blessed them, thereby assuring them of His abiding love in which He would continue to bless them unto the end of time. In His uplifted, blessing hands, which still retain the print of the nails, we can also read our redemption from sin and death and the wrath to come. With them He still sends down His countless blessings to-day on all that love Him and believe in Him. May His blessing be with us to-day and all the remaining days of our life! May He in His love bless us all with the sweet assurance that all our sins are pardoned in His atoning blood. May He bless us with a faith that confidently trusts His wise, though often mysterious guidance and that sees even in the darkest night of sorrow its tearful path brightened by the love-light of His holy presence. May He bless His battling and confessing Church and give her victory after victory over all the enemies of His Gospel! May He ever bless our dear America, save her with His mighty arm from all foes within and without, and abide with us until our pilgrimage is over and we stand before His visible presence in His glorious home above!

Who is this, that comes in glory, With the trump of jubilee?
Lord of battles, God of armies, He hath gained the victory.
He who on the cross did suffer, He who from the grave arose,
He has vanquished sin and Satan; He by death has spoiled His foes.

While He raised His hands in blessing, He was parted from His friends,
While their eager eyes behold Him, He upon the clouds ascends;
He who walked with God and pleased Him, Preaching truth and doom
to come,

He, our Enoch, is translated To His everlasting home.

May 31.

In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. *John 14, 2. 3.*

How all our hearts ought to leap for joy when we hear our blessed Lord giving us this glorious promise! Can we hear it without devoutly praying: "Draw us to Thee, For then shall we Walk in Thy steps forever And hasten on Where Thou art gone To be with Thee, dear Savior"? O what bliss, what comfort, it is to know from the truthful lips of our blessed Lord Himself that He has prepared a place for His believing and loving disciples where they shall rest from all labor and sin and sorrow and be at home with their dear Master forevermore! It is true, we must all confess that on account of our manifold sins we are not worthy of such great joy and glory. But yet we are Christ's redeemed children, washed clean by faith in His atoning blood, and we know that He, our faithful Savior, will keep His promise for the sake of His free grace and mercy, in which He delights to save just such poor, guilty, but repentant sinners as we are. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father in this our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the propitiation for our sins, aye, for the sins of the whole world. Trusting alone in His saving merit, in His effectual pleading with the Father for us, in His unfailing promise, let us daily ask Him to pardon our sins and to grant us His Holy Spirit's aid that we may keep ourselves clean and pure within, unspotted from the world, and ever walk the paths that lead to our heavenly home.

My Jesus is gone up to heaven
To get a place for me;
For 'tis His will that where He is,
There should His servants be.

I have a God that changeth not:
Why should I be perplexed?
My God, that owns me in this world,
Will own me in the next.

My dearest friends, they dwell above;
Them will I go to see:
And all my friends in Christ below
Will soon come after me.

June 1.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me. *John 15, 26.*

“Truth crushed to earth shall rise again: The eternal years of God are hers.” That is preeminently the case with the saving truth of Christ’s Gospel. Ever since the apostles began to preach it from the first day of Pentecost, it has met with the fiercest opposition and even bloody persecution. But all attacks made upon it by foes from without or heretics within the Church have not succeeded in destroying it. Victoriously has it withstood all the assaults of twenty hostile centuries, and it still shines on the world to-day in all its pristine power and beauty. Why? Because the Spirit that testifies it to the hearts of men is God’s own Spirit of Truth. As indestructible as is God Himself, so indestructible is the saving Gospel of Christ witnessed by the Holy Spirit. We need not fear for it. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall never pass away. He is with it unto the end of the world. But the great question for us is: Has the Holy Spirit come into our hearts with His saving Gospel and made us firm believers in Christ as our *personal* Savior? Everything depends for us on that question: our pardon with God, our peace of conscience, our eternal life and happiness. We can all find the saving truth in Christ, now that the ascended Savior has sent the Holy Spirit into the world with the Gospel. All we need to do is to open our ears and hearts to it, and the Holy Spirit will begin, and continue, and finish His enlightening, sanctifying, and saving work in us also, make and keep us believing disciples of Christ, children of God, heirs of eternal life.

O Holy Spirit, enter in,
And in our hearts Thy work begin,
Thy temple deign to make us;
Sun of the soul, Thou Light divine,
Around and in us brightly shine,
To joy and gladness wake us.
That we, To Thee
Truly living, To Thee giving
Prayer unceasing,
Still may be in love increasing.

June 2.

And ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with Me from the beginning. *John 15, 27.*

Because the apostles were with the Lord from the beginning of His public career, saw His mighty works, heard His words and teachings, saw Him alive after His Passion, and witnessed His ascension, they could give direct and reliable testimony concerning His life and His work here on earth. They did so with great zeal and courage after they had received the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost. In the written Word which they have left us they still speak to us as the chosen eye-witnesses of our Lord, and no power on earth or in hell can refute their testimony. But not they alone were called to witness in behalf of the Savior; every Christian, be he man, woman, or child, has that blessed calling. A witness is called upon to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If the Holy Spirit has brought us to know the saving truth as it is in Jesus, it is our sacred duty to bear witness of that truth before friend and foe wherever and whenever opportunity offers, but especially when the blessed name or Gospel of our Savior is attacked in our presence. Then we are not to be ashamed or afraid to confess our faith in Him, in His grace, and in His holy Word. "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." And not only with word of mouth are we to confess Jesus, our Savior, but also by a holy, blameless life. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Thus St. Peter writes of all Christians without exception. O how often we forget this sacred privilege and duty of our spiritual priesthood! How often we forget to bear witness for Christ as we ought! Let us pray God the Holy Spirit to make us more faithful and more zealous witnesses in behalf of our blessed Lord and Savior.

Stand up! — stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own;
Put on the Gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there!

Stand up! — stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next, the victor's song.
To him that overcometh
A crown of life shall be;
He with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally.

June 3.

If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him! *Luke 11, 13.*

By nature we are all evil, full of sin, and therefore more or less given to greed and selfishness. Yet, when a child among us asks his father for bread, he will not give him a stone. Even sinful fathers know how to give good gifts to their children. Still, when the children in their ignorance ask them for harmful things, they will not grant their wish. Love for their children moves them to give them only good things. We are all God's children by faith in Jesus Christ. Our heavenly Father, however, is not limited in His power, wisdom, and love as are earthly, sinful fathers. He never makes mistakes. In our ignorance we often ask Him for things that would prove harmful to our temporal or eternal welfare. So He, in His loving wisdom, often does not grant our prayers. But one prayer He is always ready to grant us — the prayer for the gift of His Holy Spirit. What a blessed truth! What greater, what more necessary, what more precious gift can we ask of the heavenly Father than His Holy Spirit? Do we need comfort in the many sorrows and tribulations of life? The Holy Spirit becomes our Comforter. Do we grow weak in faith, cold in love, poor in hope, — who else than God the Holy Spirit can revive our drooping hearts? Do we need courage to confess our faith before the enemies of Christ, strength daily to walk securely in the narrow path, and fearless confidence for the solemn hour of death? All this God's Holy Spirit alone can and will give us. Then let us take our blessed Savior at His word. Let us daily and confidently ask the heavenly Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we shall not lack any good thing.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Let Thy bright beams arise:
Dispel the sorrow from our minds,
The darkness from our eyes.

Revive our drooping faith,
Our doubts and fears remove,
And kindle in our breasts the flame
Of never-dying love.

Convince us of our sin,
Then lead to Jesus' blood,
And to our wondering view reveal
The mercies of our God.

June 4.

And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced. *Zech. 12, 10.*

It is terrible to hear that millions upon millions of the inhabitants of our country grow up, live, and die without knowing our holy Christian Creed and, therefore, without knowing anything of their Savior or of His Holy Spirit. The only "spirit" they hear of is the so-called "spirit of the times," which in the columns of the newspapers and magazines preaches its ungodly doctrines, glorifying the progress and achievements of the human race. Can we wonder that the very foundations of society are beginning to totter when such a spirit, defying God and His holy Word, is abroad in the land? We have been instructed in the saving truths of our holy Christian Creed from our youth. We have learned what the Bible teaches concerning our Savior and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. We know that no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost, and that he who hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His. Have we, then, Christ's Holy Spirit dwelling in us? In other words, are we true Christians? For to be a Christian means to be anointed with Christ's Spirit. From our text we can all learn whether or not we are Christians who have the Holy Spirit in us. Do we know and feel our great need of a Savior from sin and guilt? Do we earnestly desire to be saved? And do we therefore long for the grace and mercy of God? Lo, then we have the Holy Spirit; for He is a Spirit of grace, as our text says. It is He that works this desire for grace in us by pointing us to our crucified Redeemer and showing us in His wounded, pierced hands and feet the only ground of our salvation. Do we pray? Do we desire to pray more frequently and fervently than we do? Lo, then we have the Spirit of Christ; for He is a Spirit of supplications and prayer, who cries also in our hearts, "Abba, Father!"

His Spirit in me dwelleth,
And o'er my mind He reigns;
All sorrow He dispelleth
And soothes away all pains.
He crowns His work with blessing
And helpeth me to cry,
"My Father!" without ceasing,
To Him who dwells on high.

And when my spirit flutters
In weakness and despair,
Then words and sighs He utters
Of more than mortal prayer;
And God forthwith discerns them,
Although they give no sound,
And into language turns them,
E'en in the heart's deep ground.

June 5.

I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. *John 14, 18.*

Our compassionate Savior knew how desolate His dear disciples would be after His leaving them in order to suffer and to die. Bereft of His beloved presence, they would be like forsaken, homeless orphans who are left alone in the world with no father to cherish and protect them, no mother to love and comfort them. And such was actually the sorrowful condition of the disciples during the three days their Lord and Master lay in the grave. But He did not leave them such forsaken, comfortless orphans. He kept His promise given them here in our text. After three short days He comes to them again as the victorious Conqueror of death and the grave; and when He ascends into heaven, He sends them His Holy Spirit, through whom He abides with them all the days of their lives. This sweet and precious promise our merciful Savior gives to us also: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." In His Holy Spirit He came to us also in our baptism and comes daily to us in His blessed Word. If we believe in Him, His Spirit dwells in our heart and teaches us to pray, "Abba, Father!" Though father and mother forsake us, though we be lonely orphans or desolate widowers or grief-stricken widows in this world, He does not leave us comfortless. He comes to us in His divine Word with the cheering promise: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In Him we have a rich provider; for: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." In Him we find an almighty Protector; for He says: "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In Him we have a home, a blessed home, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Does He not say to us: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be"? May God help us to be His faithful followers; then, with Jesus at our side, we shall never be comfortless in this world.

To mine His Spirit speaketh
Sweet words of holy cheer,
How God, to him that seeketh
For rest, is always near,
And how He hath erected
A city fair and new,
Where what our faith expected
We evermore shall view.

In yonder home doth flourish
My heritage, my lot;
Though here I die and perish,
My heaven shall fail me not.
Though care my life oft saddens
And causeth tears to flow,
The light of Jesus gladdens
And sweetens every woe.

June 6.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them. *Ezek. 36, 26. 27.*

Blessed "I will" of our merciful God and Father in heaven! Five times He says: "I will," in order to teach us how earnestly He desires our conversion and salvation. By nature we were all dead in trespasses and sins. We had a stone heart, which remained hard and unimpressed when hearing the fiery threatenings of His condemning Law or the sweetest invitations of His pardoning Gospel. Nay, more! We had a carnally minded heart that could only oppose and resist God's good and gracious will regarding our conversion and salvation. Rom. 8, 7. Not one of us has willed, or could will, his conversion. Whoever says that the unconverted sinner can convert himself or assist in any way in being converted, had better ask God to open the eyes of his understanding for our text. For here we learn that it is God, and not we, who gives us a new heart in place of our old sin-corrupted heart. It is God, and not we, who gives us a heart of "flesh," that is, a susceptible heart, instead of our stony heart. It is God, and not we, who gives us His Holy Spirit that now dwells in us and keeps us in faith, contends against the evil desires of our flesh, excites us to lead a holy life, to love God and our fellow-men, in a word, to show ourselves true Christians. Our conversion and salvation, then, is alone and altogether the gracious and unmerited work of our merciful God and Father in heaven, reconciled to us lost sinners through the saving merit of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him be all glory in this world and in the world to come! Come to us, O Holy Spirit; for

'Tis Thine to cleanse the heart,
To sanctify the soul,
To pour fresh life on every part,
And new-create the whole.

Dwell, therefore, in our hearts,
Our minds from bondage free;
Then shall we know and praise and love
The Father, Son, and Thee.

June 7.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [or things] in Christ. *Eph. 1, 3.*

A little crippled boy was lying in the hospital, when the bells began to ring on Christmas morning. "What are the bells ringing for?" he asked the nurse. "Why, it's Christmas," sweetly replied the kind-hearted nurse. "The Savior is born, born also for you to bless and to save you." "Oh, then I must thank Him," joyfully exclaimed the little sufferer and repeated the prayer the nurse taught him. Do we ever thank God sufficiently for all the rich heavenly blessings He has showered on us in Christ? We are very anxious about His giving us temporal blessings, health and fortune and friends and all good earthly things. And at times we thank Him for them. But could we really enjoy our temporal blessings without the spiritual blessings of our God? If we had no Word of God, no Sacrament, no forgiveness of sins, no peace of conscience, no Savior, no Holy Spirit to bring us to, and keep us in, faith, to comfort us in sorrow, to dry our tears at the grave of our loved ones, to fill us with hope in the hour of death, — what would our temporal blessings avail us? What would life be worth? Oh, let us learn to thank and praise God for His many spiritual blessings. They are more necessary, far more valuable and precious, than great wealth or honor or all the pleasures of the world. The rich man in the well-known Bible story lived and died without them and perished forever. Poor Lazarus found comfort in them in his affliction, was happy and blessed with them in his deep poverty and misery, and now is there where fulness of joy and pleasures at the right hand of God are his portion forever.

Jehovah, let me now adore Thee,
For where is there a God such, Lord, as Thou?
With songs I fain would come before Thee;
O let Thy Holy Spirit teach me now
To praise Thee in His name, through whom alone
Our songs can please Thee, through Thy blessed Son.

O Father, draw me to my Savior
That Thy dear Son may draw me unto Thee;
Thy Spirit guide my whole behavior
And rule both sense and reason thus in me,
That, Lord, Thy peace I taste may ne'er depart,
But wake sweet melodies within my heart.

June 8.

And they [the disciples] were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. *Acts 2, 4.*

The first divine and heavenly gift for which we need to thank the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort in these days of Pentecost is His Holy Spirit, whom He shed on the disciples amid great signs and wonders. We must not think, however, that the Holy Spirit came into the world for the first time on Pentecost Day, when He moved the apostles to preach the Gospel in all the languages of the then known world. No; God's Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts of men, converting and saving them, ever since the fall of Adam, when God gave the first Gospel-promise of the coming Redeemer. But in Old Testament times the Holy Spirit performed His saving work more in secret and within limitations. The promised Savior had not yet come and accomplished His great work of redemption. But now the Son of God had come into our flesh and had reconciled the world to God and returned to the Father. Now the time had come when the glorious promise which God spoke by the mouth of the prophet Joel should be fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh." *Acts 2, 17.* All flesh, all men, have been redeemed by Christ. But as no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost, all men must now have the Gospel of Christ preached to them; for the Gospel is the only means by which the Holy Ghost comes to men and works saving faith in their hearts. *Gal. 3, 2.* Hence the apostles, who were to be Christ's ambassadors in all the world, received the miraculous gift to preach the Gospel in all languages to the many-tongued multitude on Pentecost Day. Through Christ's Word and Sacraments the Holy Ghost comes to us also and works faith and hope and love in our hearts. Have we not abundant reason to thank God for the gift of the Holy Ghost?

Send, O God, a gentle shower,
For my heart is dry as sand;
Father, bathe Thy drooping flower,
Water Thou Thy thirsty land;
Let Thy Holy Spirit's boon
O'er me from Thy heavenly throne
Like abundant streams be flowing,
Blessings on my heart bestowing.

Jesus, who for my salvation
To the Father didst ascend,
Hear my earnest supplication,
Unto me Thy Spirit send;

Let the Comforter for aye
Bide with me, my Strength and Stay,
That in faith I may not waver,
Steadfast in the truth forever.

Holy Ghost, strength of the simple,
O make Thine abode with me,
Let me ever be Thy temple;
Cheerfully I welcome Thee.
Do Thou purify my heart,
Cast out all things that might part
Me from those sweet joys of heaven
Which by Thee to faith are given.

June 9.

We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. *Acts 2, 11.*

What the wonderful works of God were which the astonished multitude of Jews and proselytes heard the apostles speak in their native tongues we hear from the lips of Peter in the following verses. They are the wonderful works which God has done in His only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world. The Gospel, the blessed Gospel, is now being preached from the housetops, and that is the second divine and heavenly gift which Pentecost has brought us and for which we need to thank God all the days of our life. The Gospel, as we know, is the glad tidings that we poor sinners are saved alone by the grace of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This blessed doctrine was known also to the children of God in the Old Testament. They possessed it in the promises which God gave them concerning the future Messiah, or Savior. But they were still under the bondage of the Law, and the Gospel-promises were to them like the first golden beams of the rising sun. They longed and sighed for the time when the Savior would come and lead them out into the glowing noontide of His grace and peace and liberty. With the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples and with the resultant preaching of the Gospel of free and full salvation in the crucified and risen Savior in all tongues, the brightly shining sun of God's mercy and love for sinners rose upon the world never to set again. Now the glad spiritual springtide has come of which the Bride sings: "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, and come away." Song of Sol. 2, 11—13. Yes, come, all ye dear, beloved souls that are weary and heavy laden with sin and sorrow, come to Jesus, and He will give you rest.

The Spirit, in our hearts,
Is whispering, "Sinner, come!"
The Bride, the Church of Christ, proclaims
To all His children, "Come!"

Let him that heareth say
To all about him, "Come!"
Let him that thirsts for righteousness
To Christ, the Fountain, come!

June 10.

Then they that gladly received his [Peter's] word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2, 41. 42.

So effectually did God the Holy Ghost work through the Gospel which Peter and the rest of the apostles preached on Pentecost Day that three thousand sinful souls were converted and added to the number of Christ's believing disciples. Pentecost, then, is the birthday, so to speak, of the New Testament Church, of the holy Christian Church; and that is the third glorious Pentecostal gift that demands our sincerest gratitude. For what a blessed institution is the Church of Christ in the Sodom and Gomorrah of this wicked world! It is God's city of refuge, our Zoar, whither we and all poor sinners can fly in order to escape the wrath to come. Here our blessed Savior Himself resides in His holy Word and Sacraments to feed and nourish our languishing souls with the Bread of Life. Here we are united in the sweet bonds of one faith, one hope, one love with all fellow-believers, no matter what their sex, or age, or tribe, or language may be. Here all earth-born walls of partition crumble and fall away; for all are brothers and sisters in the one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all. Eph. 4, 5, 6. On a crowded Eastern steamer plowing its way through the Indian Ocean a Christian Hindu and a Christian Chinaman were among the passengers. They could not understand each other's language, but when the Chinaman saw the Hindu pull out his New Testament, he did the same and said, "Jesus" to the Hindu, who joyfully exclaimed, "Hallelujah!" What a wonderful, happy Church that will be in heaven when the last sinner is brought home and all the ransomed hosts sing in *one* tongue the song of Moses and of the Lamb! May we be among that adoring multitude — by the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I love Thy Church, O God!
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

Should I with scoffers join
Her altars to abuse?
No! better far my tongue were dumb,
My hand its skill should lose.

For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend:
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end.

June 11.

And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, "What meaneth this?" *Acts 2, 12.*

Many of the people who heard the disciples speaking in other tongues did not know what to make of it and asked, "What meaneth this?" They were informed soon afterwards by the Apostle Peter in his inspiring sermon. Since then every person can and ought to know what the Pentecostal miracle means for him and all mankind. But there are still so many who do not know it. Some think that on Pentecost the apostles received only the miraculous gift to preach the Gospel in foreign languages and to heal the sick. Now that the apostles and their miraculous gifts have passed away, they imagine Pentecost has little meaning for us later Christians. These wonderful gifts, however, were only the external vessel in which the apostles received the true Pentecostal gift, the gift of the Holy Ghost, who still abides with the Church in the blessed Gospel of Christ. But the greatest mistake so many people make about Pentecost is this, that they maintain that the apostles only preached a *more refined Moral Law* than Moses and the prophets had proclaimed in Old Testament times. They see in Christianity and the Gospel of Christ a sort of religion whose summary is the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man and which makes the Golden Rule—the love of your neighbor—the true ladder to heaven. How terrible! By this false doctrine they abolish the heaven-wide difference between the Old Testament age with its bondage under the Law and the blessed New Testament times with their glorious liberty in Christ. With His precious blood our dear Lord Jesus Christ has forever freed us from the curse and the bondage of Moses' Law, and Pentecost ushered in that new covenant of pardon and peace and liberty of which God Himself prophesied so often in the Old Testament, for instance, Jer. 31, 31—34.

Now do we pray God the Holy Ghost
For the true faith, which we need the most,
And that He defend us when life is ending,
And from exile home we shall be wending.
Lord, have mercy!

Shine in our hearts, O most precious Light,
That we Jesus Christ may know aright,
Clinging to our Savior, whose blood has bought us,
Who again to our true home has brought us.
Lord, have mercy!

June 12.

They shall put My name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them. *Num. 6, 27.*

Here God commands Moses to instruct Aaron and his sons, who were His priests, to lay His holy name on the assembled congregation of Israel. In His name He would come to the children of Israel and bless them. This name and blessing of our God is still laid on us every Sunday when we meet for divine services in our churches. But is it not sad to see people leave church before the benediction is pronounced? No doubt, many of them look upon this divine benediction as an empty ritualistic form, having no value for them. What a mistake! God does not lie when He says that He will bless us as often as His holy name is laid upon us. The pastor who speaks the benediction is only God's mouthpiece, His trumpet. Now, it is not the trumpet that gives forth the sound, but he who blows it. So it is not the pastor that blesses us, but God Himself. His name, we know, is He Himself as He has revealed Himself to us in His holy Word, in all His glorious nature and will and works. This His saving name, filled with divine and everlasting blessing, the Triune God lays upon us in the benediction, and whoever humbly bows his head and takes it with a believing heart receives it, and in it the richest treasure he can desire for body and soul. And this great divine blessing so many among us no longer esteem. Poor souls! What would they be, what would they have, what would they accomplish, without the blessing of God, which makes us rich in time and eternity? Oh, let us not despise the blessing which God pronounces on His people at the close of each divine service! Let us never miss church without a valid reason, and when in church, let us not leave until the benediction has been pronounced, and then let us accept it for *our own person* in humble, grateful faith and take it with us into our daily life.

Abide, O dearest Jesus,
Among us with Thy grace
That Satan may not harm us
Nor we to sin give place.

Abide, O dear Redeemer,
Among us with Thy Word,
And thus now and hereafter
True peace and joy afford.

Abide with richest blessings
Among us, bounteous Lord;
Let us in grace and wisdom
Grow daily through Thy Word.

June 13.

The Lord bless thee and keep thee. *Num. 6, 24.*

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” writes St. James. Jas. 1, 17. God the Father, then, is the Fountain of all life and blessing. From Him come all temporal and spiritual gifts that bless the life of man. While Israel was traveling to the Promised Land through the dreary wilderness, the priest pronounced this blessing upon them after each morning and evening sacrifice. But so many of the Israelites did not believe it and accept it and hence did not prosper. The Lord’s promises never fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the true and everlasting Word of our God. So when He says that He will bless us when His name is pronounced upon us, He will do so. Alas! so many no longer believe it and hence never succeed in life. They have not, because they do not seek and accept God’s enriching blessing. Again, the blessing reads: “The Lord keep thee.” He, the Keeper of Israel, never slumbers nor sleeps. He still has His holy angels to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. He still can and does send them forth to protect His believing children all their days and in all their ways, that they do not dash their feet against a stone. Oh, what soul-reviving comfort it is to know that God still sends His guardian angel hosts to protect us on our weary journey through the wilderness of this world of sin and danger! Let us daily take our refuge under this protecting blessing of our heavenly Father, and no evil will come nigh us.

The Lord, my God, be praised,
My Light, my Life from heaven,
My Maker, who to me
Hath soul and body given,
My Father, who protects
My life from infancy
And mighty gifts of love
Hath e’er bestowed on me.

June 14.

The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. *Num. 6, 25.*

When Moses pleaded with God to show Him His glory, God answered Him: "Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live." Ex. 33, 20. The reason is that God's holiness is like consuming fire for sinful man. His holiness is so great that even the angels are not pure in His sight. Job 15, 15. God, therefore, must veil His face for the sinner. He did so for Moses and Israel when He led them on their journey through the wilderness in the cloud of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night. But who was it that thus led Israel in the wilderness and shed His bright glory over their camp at night? It was none other than God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we gather from Paul's own words, 1 Cor. 10, 1—5. Christ is the brightness of God the Father's glory and the express image of His person. Heb. 1, 3. When Philip said to Him: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," He could answer: "Philip, he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." John 14, 8. 9. When we, therefore, hear the blessing: "The Lord make His face shine upon thee," we are to know that it is God's gracious face shining on us in the person of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, of whom John confesses: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In Him, in Him alone, God is gracious unto us and hears our plea when we repentantly pray with the publican: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Are we not blessed when we thus have God's grace in Christ Jesus, our Lord? What good thing for body or soul can we lack if the almighty and everlasting God in heaven loves us and pardons us and blesses us for Jesus' sake?

The Lord, my God, be praised,
My Trust, my Life from heaven,
The Father's own dear Son,
Whose life for me was given;
Who thus atoned for me
With His most precious blood;
Who giveth to my faith
The greatest heavenly good.

June 15.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace. *Num. 6, 26.*

This third part in the benediction, says an expositor very happily, is the *keystone* in the arch, completing and uniting the whole. The blessing of God the Father, consisting in His eternal counsel of grace upon us, the blessing of God the Son, consisting in His redemption, God the Holy Spirit conveys and applies to us. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and is the Comforter, whose mission is to glorify Jesus, to exalt His blessed name and work before us, and thus to lead us into all saving truth. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Rom. 8, 16. In Him we all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Cor. 3, 18. The rising sun drives the shades of night away and imparts new life and power to all creatures. So new powers of spiritual life come upon us when God the Holy Spirit shines into our hearts through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we are born again, made new creatures in the image of God, faintly here, but completely there, where we shall behold God's face in righteousness and shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness. Ps. 17, 15. By bringing us to faith in Christ, God's Holy Spirit "gives us peace." What greater joy, what greater blessing, can any mortal desire than to be assured of grace and peace with God, his Maker and his Judge? May this blessed peace of God, which passeth all understanding, be ours and keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus to life everlasting!

The Lord, my God, be praised,
My Hope, my Life from heaven,
The Father's Spirit, whom
The Son to me hath given;
He who revives my heart
And gives me strength and power,
Help, comfort, and support
In sorrow's gloomy hour.

June 16.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Matt. 28, 19.

In giving His command to baptize, the Lord Jesus does not command us to observe any particular *mode* of baptism. As long as water is applied, be it by dipping or sprinkling or pouring, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, it constitutes a valid baptism. Those are wrong, therefore, who declare only such baptism to be a Christian baptism by which a person is immersed or dipped in water. The apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Day. But how? By the Holy Ghost's being *poured out upon them*. We furthermore have proof that the apostles themselves did not baptize by immersion alone, but also by our common mode of pouring water on the head. This proof is established by the historic document known as *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, which probably dates from the later apostolic age, about the beginning of the second century. Again, when Baptists object to the baptism of children because Christ did not expressly command it, we must answer them that neither did He expressly command women to be baptized. But He does command to baptize all *nations* and thus includes the women and children. Neither does their objection hold good that little children cannot believe and therefore should not be baptized. In Baptism the Holy Ghost is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, St. Paul says, Titus, chapter third. He justifies also our sin-born children in Baptism by His grace and makes them heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3, 7. The inspired apostle certainly knows more about the work of the Holy Spirit in Baptism than any of us know. Let no one, therefore, deprive his little child of Holy Baptism, but let him bring it to the saving font, where the Triune God makes it His child and an heir of everlasting life.

At Jesus' feet our infant sweet
We lay with all its stain
That renders it for heav'n unmeet
Until 'tis born again;
We here embrace His proffered grace
In this baptismal wave,
Nor shall the world our trust efface —
The bath its soul will save.

June 17.

Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Matt. 28, 19.

Here the only-begotten Son of God who is in the bosom of the Father declares and formulates the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in the most solemn manner. He clearly teaches us that there are three persons in the Godhead, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and yet there are not three Gods, but only *one God*. Therefore Christ does not say “in the *names*,” but uses the singular form, and says “in the *name*.” This doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Christ’s apostles held and taught at all times, as their writings clearly show. Paul teaches it when he writes to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. 13, 14: “The grace of *the Lord Jesus Christ*, and the love of *God*, and the communion of *the Holy Ghost* be with you all.” When the Unitarians and other sects deny the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, they place themselves outside the pale of the Christian Church. If they baptize at all, their baptism is no Christian Baptism and not valid in the eyes of God; for it is not administered after God’s ordinance and command. When any of these people want to join our Church, they must first be baptized in the name of the Triune God; for Baptism is not simple water only, not a mere human ritual, but it is a means of grace, by which we are taken into the communion of the blessed Trinity. In Baptism the name of the Triune God is laid upon us; God the Father comes to us as our reconciled Creator, God the Son as our Redeemer and Savior, God the Holy Ghost as our Regenerator and Comforter. Is it not sad to think that millions in our country are born, live, and die without being baptized and therefore without being made children of God? Let us thank God for our baptism and at all times comfort ourselves with it against all our sins and in all our afflictions.

I was made a Christian
When my name was giv’n,
One of God’s dear children
And an heir of heav’n.
In the name of Christian
I will glory now,
Evermore remember
My baptismal vow.
I must, like a Christian,
Shun all evil ways,
Keep the faith of Jesus,
Serve Him all my days.

Called to be a Christian,
I will praise the Lord,
Seek for His assistance
So to keep my word.
All a Christian’s blessings
I will claim for mine:
Holy work and worship,
Fellowship divine.
Father, Son, and Spirit,
Give me grace that I
Still may live a Christian
And a Christian die.

June 18.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! *Rom. 11, 33.*

“Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” God called out to Moses when He appeared to him in the burning bush. Ex. 3, 5. Lowly reverence is the only attitude becoming a sinful mortal in the presence of the living God. Holiness is the habitation of our God; wonderful is He both as to His divine being and His marvelous works. No created mind can fathom the deep things of His Godhead or unravel His unsearchable providences. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. Yet man is often so perverse in his sinful pride that he will cavil at God’s holy Word and decry, even denounce, His sovereign dispensations. But “woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?” Is. 45, 9. May God in His mercy preserve us from such arrogance! We will say with Abraham: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Gen. 18, 25. And with Moses we declare: “Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.” Deut. 32, 3. 4. Though we may not understand the dark, mysterious ways He often leads us in this world, we will by the aid of His Holy Spirit believe and declare with the psalmist: “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies” (Ps. 25, 10), and will sing and say with the sweetly comforting hymn: “Beloved, ‘It is well!’ God’s ways are *always* right; And perfect love is o’er them all, Though far above our sight.” May He help us boldly to confess His saving Word and His holy triune name before all men in these dangerous days of drunken science and world-wide unbelief! May He bless us and keep us to-day in the one true Christian faith and help us to adorn it with a pious, Christian life, for Jesus’ sake!

Blessed Father, Son, and Spirit,
Glorious Godhead, Three in One!
Guide us on our way to heaven

Through the merit of the Son.
Guide and guard us
Till we see Thee on Thy throne.

June 19.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. *John 3, 3.*

These solemn words of the Savior to Nicodemus apply to us also. They ought to arouse in every one of us the question: Am I born again, and can I therefore begin this new day as a regenerated and beloved child of God? One thing is sure: We were all born again when we were baptized in the name of the Triune God. For Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word. It is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul writes, Titus, chapter third; and therefore Baptism works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare. But do we still believe the gracious words and promises God has given us in our baptism? Do we really believe what Jesus says to Nicodemus, namely, that we are born of water and of the Spirit? Are we still what we were made in Holy Baptism — children of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Our best answer to this heart-searching question will be the prayer: O Thou Triune God, my Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, I must humbly confess before Thee this morning that I have often broken my baptismal vow in thought, word, and deed. Yet by Thy unmerited grace I can truthfully say that I desire nothing more earnestly than to be and remain Thy beloved and obedient child in time and eternity. Trusting in Thy unfailing promise, which assured me at my baptism that Thy kindness and the covenant of Thy peace should not depart from me, I come before Thee with my humble prayer mercifully to forgive me my backsliding for the sake of my Savior, Jesus Christ, whose holy blood cleanses from all sin. O grant me Thy Holy Spirit that I may daily crucify my sinful flesh and the lusts thereof and walk in righteousness and holiness before Thee. Strengthen my weak faith and keep me faithful to my baptismal vow until the end, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Baptized into Thy name most holy,
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
I claim a place, though weak and lowly,
Among Thy seed, Thy chosen host;
Buried with Christ and dead to sin,
Thy Spirit now shall live within.

June 20.

God is Love. 1 John 4, 8.

The very first Bible-verse we learned at mother's knee or in Sunday-school was this little verse: "God is Love." Yet we have not finished learning it. We need to learn it anew every day and to take its blessed truth more and more to heart. Nominal Christians are quite ready to admit with the mouth that God is Love, but only as long as they can enjoy God's countless material blessings. When, however, the dark days of adversity — sickness, poverty, or other trials — come upon them, then their supposed faith in the love of God vanishes as smoke in the air. Therefore the heathen know nothing of a God of love; for "in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." Only those who firmly believe in the Son of God, the Savior of sinners, as their *personal* Savior from sin and death hold unwaveringly to the truth that "God is Love" even when they are in the fiery furnace of affliction; for they know that all His chastisements are founded on His holy love and have only their temporal and eternal happiness in view.

Thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God of perfect, never-ending love, we pray Thee to destroy in our hearts all sinful love of self or of this wicked world with its fleeting treasures and pleasures. All earthly things shall pass away, but Thy great love, O God, abides for aye. Help us ever to abide in Thy holy Word with true and childlike faith, then will we also abide in Thy love, and Thou wilt come to us and make Thy blessed abode of love also in our hearts. Thy quickening love will then give us strength for every task, will make us willing for every sacrifice, will comfort us in all afflictions, and bless us with joy and peace even in the hour of death. Grant us grace, O God, we pray Thee, That we may with all our might, All our lifetime, day and night, Love and trust Thee and obey Thee; And when this brief life is o'er, Praise and love Thee evermore. Amen.

God is Love; His mercy brightens
All the path in which we rove;
Bliss He wakes, and woe He lightens;
God is Wisdom, God is Love.

E'en the hour that darkest seemeth
Will His changeless goodness prove;
From the gloom His brightness streameth;
God is Wisdom, God is Love.

June 21.

And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Ex. 17, 11.

Moses has grown old; he no longer can lead the hosts of Israel in battle against their enemies. He therefore resigns his command to Joshua in the war with Amalek. But Moses is not too old to pray to God for victory. While the battle rages, he lifts up his hands in fervent prayer, and every time he lets his tired hands sink, the battle turns against Israel. Now he has Aaron and Hur hold up his hands until the going down of the sun, when the enemy is routed and the victory completely won. What an inspiring example Moses here gives to our old Christians who no longer can actively engage in work and often complain about being so useless and impatiently wait for death! Ah, you dear old fathers and mothers in Israel, stop your grieving and complaining and follow the example of Moses here! If you can do nothing else, you can all pray; and you know the apostle says that fervent prayer availeth much. Jas. 5, 16. Employ your lonely hours by praying, praying for your loved ones, for your Church, for your missionaries, for your dear country, for the poor and the sick and the dying. The great Church Father Augustine was a wayward boy in his youth. But his old mother Monica persisted in praying for him and beseeching God for his conversion. One day her pastor, Bishop Ambrose, said to her: "It is impossible that a child of so many tears and prayers should not be saved." And God did finally hear Monica's prayers, and her son became a faithful confessor and mighty defender of Christ's saving Truth. Oh, how many glorious examples there are of the great saving power of persistent and interceding prayer! The battling Church of Christ needs nothing so much in these restless, stormy, evil days as the effectual earnest prayers of its faithful adherents. Then let all of us, and especially our old Simeons and Annas, pray, pray Christ's cause on to *victory*.

If you cannot be the watchman
Standing high on Zion's wall,
Pointing out the path to heaven,
Offering life and peace to all, —
With your prayers and with your bounties
You can do what heaven demands,
You can be like faithful Aaron
Holding up the prophet's hands.

June 22.

And he said unto him, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." *Luke 16, 31.*

A pious pastor one day had preached on future punishment. The next morning a young man called on him and said: "There is a small dispute between you and me, pastor, and I thought I would call and settle it right away." "What is it?" asked the pastor. "Why," said the young man, "you say that the wicked will go into everlasting punishment, and I do not think that they will." "Oh, if that is all," said the minister, "there is no dispute between you and me. If you turn to Matt. 25, 46, you will find that the dispute is between you and the Lord Jesus Christ; and I advise you to go immediately and settle it with Him." Matt. 25, 46 the Lord Jesus declares: "These [the wicked] shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Whoever will not believe that there is a hell, let him settle it with the Lord Jesus. But what is it that brings so many—alas, so many!—into everlasting punishment? The rich man in hell now sees what a terrible mistake he made in refusing to repent while in this life. But he is still blind to the fact that the Word of God alone works saving repentance, and that it was *his neglect of God's Word* that brought him into everlasting punishment. In vain he asks Abraham to let Lazarus return from the dead to his five brethren and warn them that they might repent. Abraham tells him his brethren have Moses and the prophets, the converting, saving Word of God. If they despise and reject that, no miracle, no warning voice from the dead, will save them. God's Word alone has power to work repentance and faith in the sinner and to save him from hell. Every mortal can know his eternal fate already in this life. How does he stand toward the Word of God?

Then woe to those who scorned the Lord
And sought but carnal pleasures,
Who here despised His precious Word
And loved their earthly treasures!
With shame and trembling they will stand
And at the Judge's stern command
To Satan be delivered.

O Jesus, who my debt didst pay
And for my sin wast smitten,
Within the book of life, O may
My name be also written!
I will not doubt; I trust in Thee,
From Satan Thou hast made me free
And from all condemnation.

June 23.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment. *Heb. 9, 27.*

Does this solemn truth frighten us? It ought not, and will not, if we are Christ's by faith. For Christ has given His believing followers the sure and blessed promise: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me *hath everlasting life* and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. John 5, 24. In Christ, our blessed Savior, we have forgiveness of sins and so shall not come into Judgment, but shall be declared free from all guilt and punishment by the righteous Judge of the living and the dead. For the unbelieving and unrepentant sinner, however, this is a most terrible truth, that death does not end his existence, as he vainly tries to believe, but that after death Judgment awaits him, where he must give an account of all things he has done in his body, whether they be good or bad. 2 Cor. 5, 10. Oh, the terrible awakening that awaits him now! For, as Paul declares, Rom. 2, 6—9: "God will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality—eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Said Anne of Austria, the Queen of France, to the wicked Cardinal Richelieu, who delighted in persecuting her: "My lord cardinal, there is one fact which you seem to have entirely forgotten: God is a sure paymaster. He may not pay at the end of every week or month or year; but I charge you, remember that He pays in the end." Yes, though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all. Death decides the eternal fate of every human being. We are in danger of death every day. Let us daily live in true repentance and faith and ever walk with Jesus. Then we need not fear death or Judgment.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!

June 24.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. *John 1, 6. 7.*

This day was known of old as the day of John the Baptist. We may still observe it, not, indeed, like the Romanists, who think that they shall merit heaven when they celebrate the festivals of the apostles and other saints. No; as true Bible Christians we observe such days, as Heb. 13, 7 admonishes, gratefully to remember these faithful witnesses and confessors of God's Word and to follow their examples of piety and steadfastness. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ, of whom our Lord Himself declares, Matt. 11, 9. 10, that he was more than a prophet. "For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee." John prepared the way of the Savior into the hearts of the people by his earnest call to repentance. "Repent," he cried, "for the kingdom of God is at hand!" So effective and impressive was his preaching that "there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about Jordan and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Matt. 3, 5. 6. Without true repentance no one can come to true faith and to forgiveness of sins in Christ. For true repentance implies that you sincerely acknowledge your sins before God and are truly sorry for them. But if John had preached only this kind of repentance and nothing more, he would not have prepared the way of Christ into the hearts of his hearers. For Christ comes to us only in His blessed Gospel. And John preached this Gospel very sweetly and clearly when he pointed the people away from himself and to Christ with these words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Then shall we celebrate his festival in a God-pleasing manner when we let John direct us to Jesus as our only Savior. For that was the Baptist's greatest joy when he saw poor sinners coming to Christ, as he himself declares, John 3, 29. 30: "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, that standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

Saint John the Baptist biddeth me
To cast my burden, Lord, on Thee,
Since Thou hast left Thy heavenly throne
That for our sins Thou might'st atone.

June 25.

I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings and will not be ashamed. *Ps. 119, 46.*

On this memorable 25th of June, in the year of our Lord 1530, our Lutheran forefathers presented our Augsburg Confession of faith to the imperial diet, or *Reichstag*, which was held under Emperor Charles V at the City of Augsburg, in Bavaria. This first and foremost confession of Evangelical Christendom contains twenty-one fundamental articles of our Christian faith and seven articles protesting against papal abuses. Like the Bible, it has been translated into almost every language of the world and has served to lead millions of souls to the saving truth as it is in Jesus; for it is founded on the Scriptures and maintains and defends the justifying power of faith in the all-sufficient merit of our Savior. It forms the basis of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopalians and of the Creed of the Methodists. The Presbyterian theologian Dr. Philip Schaff lauds it by declaring: "The Augsburg Confession is the first and foremost of all the Evangelical Confessions — the most churchly, the most catholic, and the most conservative creed of Protestantism." The sainted Dr. Krauth cites other great Protestant divines in its honor and writes: "To it, under God, more than to any other cause, the whole Protestant world owes civil and religious freedom. Under it, as a banner, the pride of Rome was broken and her armies destroyed. It is the symbol of pure Protestantism, as the three General Creeds are symbols of that developing catholicity to which genuine Protestantism is related as the maturing fruit is related to the blossom." He then points clearly to the fact that a union of the different Protestant church-bodies is possible only on the basis of the Augsburg Confession. Every Lutheran ought to be acquainted with its history and know its sacred contents. Let us read it again in these days and through it be brought to greater love of, and loyalty to, our Lutheran Church, the Church of the pure Gospel and Sacraments.

My Church! my Church! my dear old Church!
My fathers' and my own!
On prophets and apostles built,
And Christ, the Corner-stone!
All else beside, by storm or tide,
May yet be overthrown;
But not my Church — my dear old Church —
My fathers' and my own!

June 26.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba, Father.* *Rom. 8, 15.*

When a man adopts a poor orphan into his family, he places it in the conditions of his own child and endows it with all the rights and privileges of a child. Yet how rare the man who would adopt into his family a deformed and diseased little criminal! But that is just what our merciful God in His surpassing love did with us sinners when He brought us to faith in His dear Son and endowed us with His Holy Spirit. He took us deformed and diseased children of sin and death into the family of His saints and made us heirs of eternal life. Now we have the right and privilege of addressing Him by the sweet name of Father. Have we ever realized what great bliss and happiness that right confers on us? Ah, we are so accustomed to repeating the Lord's Prayer, of saying to God: "Our Father who art in heaven," that we grow cold and indifferent to this our great honor and dignity. The heathen must put us to shame. When the Danish missionaries in Malabar set some of their converts to work translating Luther's Catechism, which tells us how all believers become children of God, one of the translators was so startled that he suddenly laid down his pen and exclaimed, "It is too much! Let me rather render it, 'They shall be permitted to kiss His feet.'" *Abba, Father*, is the first word the children in the Holy Land and in all Eastern countries learn to say. And though a man live to be a hundred years or more, there is nothing higher or deeper, holier and sweeter, that he can learn about God than that the almighty and everlasting God is his Father in Christ Jesus, his Savior, and that he, therefore, in all conditions of life, in sickness, sorrow, and death, can look up to heaven with childlike confidence and pray: "*Abba, Father!*"

Grant that Thy Spirit prompt my praises,
Then shall my singing surely please Thine ear;
Sweet are the sounds my heart then raises,
My prayer in truth and spirit Thou wilt hear.
Then shall Thy Spirit raise my heart to Thee
To sing Thee psalms and praise in high degree.

For He can plead for me with sighings
That are unutterable to lips like mine;
He bids me pray with earnest cryings,
Bears witness with my soul that I am Thine,
Joint-heir with Christ, and thus may dare to say:
O *Abba, Father!* hear me when I pray.

June 27.

What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? *Matt. 16, 26.*

Here our Savior again reminds us that we carry about with us in our bodily tabernacle a priceless and irretrievable treasure, which we must zealously guard against harm or loss — our immortal soul. All work we do, all pleasure we enjoy, all suffering we endure, all company we select, all habits we indulge, every sin we commit, — all this affects and influences our soul. Daily, hourly, our soul is in danger of being besmirched and injured by sin. But what would we be profited if we should love our soul out of love for the pleasures and treasures and honors of the world? “If for a world a soul be lost, Who can the loss supply? More than a thousand worlds it cost One single soul to buy.” Our Lord Jesus has redeemed our souls, purchased and won them, from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil with His holy, precious blood. But whoever loses his soul by gaining the world forfeits his redemption by Christ. “As we love our souls, let us beware of loving the world. Love of the world has slain its thousands and tens of thousands. What ruined Lot’s wife? The world. What ruined Achan? The world. What ruined Haman? The world. What ruined Judas? The world. What ruined Simon the sorcerer? The world. What ruined Demas? The world. Then ‘what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’” Oh, the terrible blindness of the human heart! Man is so careful not to suffer any bodily harm or financial loss, but is so grossly indifferent to the welfare of his immortal soul! May we by the help of God’s Holy Spirit remember every day that we carry our souls in our hands and have no greater, no holier duty in life than to save our souls alive by sincere faith in our Savior.

In the world will foes assail me,
Crafty, stronger far than I;
And the strife will never fail me,
Well I know, before I die.
Therefore, Lord, I come believing
Thou canst give the power I need
Through the prayer of faith
 receiving
Strength, the Spirit’s strength,
indeed.

I would trust in Thy protecting,
Wholly rest upon Thine arm,
Follow wholly Thy directing,
Thou, mine only Guard from
 harm!
Keep me from mine own undoing,
Help me turn to Thee when tried;
Still my footsteps, Father,
 viewing,
Keep me ever at Thy side.

June 28.

Come; for all things are now ready! *Luke 14, 17.*

What a gracious invitation addressed by God to you, to me, to all men! Ever since our Lord Jesus in His vicarious Passion cried out on the cross, "It is finished," all things pertaining to our salvation are ready. Nothing, nothing, is lacking. The love of the Father is ready to take poor prodigals to His bosom. The grace of the Son is ready to pardon all our sins, no matter how great. The communion of the Holy Ghost is ready in Word and Sacrament to bring us to saving faith and keep us in the same, and so make us blessed partakers of all the rich and heavenly treasures in Christ. Nothing remains for us to do but to come to the feast and to taste and see the goodness of our merciful God. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Is. 55, 1. But do it *now*. *Now* all things are ready. Do not delay. You need salvation. It is offered to you as a free gift of God's love in Jesus, your Savior. Accept it in grateful faith *to-day*. Let nothing, nothing, keep you from coming to Jesus at once. No excuse you may want to offer will hold good in the eyes of the King bidding you to His gracious supper. Do you not hear it is a *supper*, the last meal in the day? Refuse to come to it, and you must go hungry through the night, the long night that knows no ending. For there is no salvation outside of Christ. Then: "Delay not, delay not, O sinner, draw near, The waters of life are now flowing for thee; No price is demanded; the Savior is here; Redemption is purchased, salvation is free. Delay not, delay not, why longer abuse The love and compassion of Jesus, thy God? A fountain is opened; how canst thou refuse To wash and be cleansed in His pardoning blood?" — May we all who hear this gracious invitation come to Jesus to-day! Let not one of us stay behind.

To-day Thy mercy calls us
To wash away our sin,
However great our trespass,
Whatever we have been;
However long from mercy
Our hearts have turned away,
Thy precious blood can cleanse us
And make us white to-day.

To-day Thy gate is open,
And all who enter in
Shall find a Father's welcome
And pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten,
A present joy be given,
A future grace be promised,
A glorious crown in heaven.

June 29.

Yet there is room! *Luke 14, 22.*

For nineteen centuries now the gracious Gospel-call has gone out in the sin-lost world: "Come; for all things are now ready!" And yet there are over eight hundred million poor heathen in the world who have never heard of their redemption by Christ and still are strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and being without God in the world. In addition, there are the many unchurched classes in our civilized countries. In our own America sixty million souls are said to be living and dying without the saving Gospel. Oh, what an incentive for us all who are feasting on the heavenly viands of saving grace to remember these countless starving souls and to do what our Savior commands: "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in" to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Compel them, how? Not by physical force or by passing all kinds of Sabbath-laws or so-called temperance laws or any other kind of laws with a view to making people better and more virtuous. You cannot legislate morality, much less religion, into the sinful human heart. Force here will only make hypocrites or rebels. The only compulsion our Lord Jesus knows of in His soul-winning work is that of the all-compelling force of His redeeming, pardoning, and saving love revealed in His glorious Gospel. That saved the old world from moral ruin and destruction. It is the only power to save the present world. What we need in these evil days is Christians who are consumed, as the first Christians were, with burning love for their perishing fellow-men, and like Peter and John, in the face of all opposition and persecution, declare: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." "For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" but the name of Jesus. Acts 4, 12. 20. May we all become such zealous witnesses of our blessed Savior! May we seize every opportunity also to-day to speak to unconverted sinners of the saving love of Jesus and bring them His gracious invitation: "Come; for all things are now ready!"

"Yet there is room," the Master has said,
Room at the feast His bounty has spread;
Out of the lanes and hedges of sin
Gather them in, gather them in!
This is the message from Jesus to-day,
Now in compassion we hear Him say,
Earnestly, tenderly, ask them to come,
Tell them there yet is room.

June 30.

For I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. *Luke 14, 24.*

The first-bidden guests to the supper refused the king's gracious invitation and offered excuses. But their empty excuses only served to anger him and to exclude them from the feast. Rightly so. Supper time is no time to go and look at real estate or to examine cattle. The men making such excuses had all day to look at the ground or the oxen they had bought. As for the man who had taken a wife, it was his plain duty to bring her along to the supper. There was yet room, and the gracious king would have been glad to welcome her at his banquet. Oh, these empty excuses, these miserable evasions, by which people try to justify their staying away from the saving Gospel-feast! They say they cannot go to church because they have no clothes to wear, or the weather doesn't suit them, or they don't like the preacher or the people in the church, or they have a pressing social or business engagement, and the like. The true reason is that their carnal hearts do not care for Christ and His saving means of grace. They are only treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath by their hypocritical excuses and will learn to their everlasting sorrow that while they could excuse themselves *into* hell they can never excuse themselves *out* of it. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me," says our Savior. Matt. 10, 37. Even those have no excuse who have married a husband or wife of no faith or of a different faith. Let them earnestly and persistently, but lovingly, strive to bring them to Christ's saving Church, and if they refuse, still come themselves. — Is our place at the supper of grace still empty? God grant that we all have come to Jesus and daily take of His fulness grace for grace! Let us pray for all our straying, erring fellow-men: —

Almighty God, whose only Son
O'er sin and death the triumph won
And ever lives to intercede
For souls who Thy sweet mercy
need;

And some within Thy sacred fold
To holy things are dead and cold
And waste the precious hours of
life
In selfish ease or toil or strife.

In His dear name to Thee we pray
For all who err and go astray,
For sinners, whosoe'er they be,
Who do not serve and honor Thee.

Oh, give repentance true and deep
To all Thy lost and wandering sheep
And kindle in their hearts the fire
Of holy love and pure desire!

July 1.

For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. *Luke 19, 10.*

The same compassionate Jesus who came to seek and to save the white man came to seek and to save also the black man. As the Lamb of God He took away the sin of the world and also the sin of the Negro race. His command to His Church is clear and emphatic: "Go ye and teach *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." His Church has obeyed that command and carried His saving Gospel also to the Negro since the day that Philip preached the glad tidings of the crucified Savior to the man of Ethiopia, the treasurer of Queen Can'-da-ce. Acts 8, 27. Ever since, there have been believing children of God with a black skin in the Christian Church, and among them there were faithful pastors and bishops of great learning and piety. We have about twelve million Negroes in our country whose fathers were slaves; and we know what it cost our nation to free them from their bondage. But far more cruel is the spiritual bondage of ignorance and superstition and vice in which so many of the sons of Ham still live among us. Men may differ about the political and social rights the Negro ought to possess among us, but no man dare question the Negro's right to the saving and uplifting Gospel of Christ. Whoever opposes Negro Missions opposes not only the clear will of his God and Savior, but opposes also the best interests of his country; for it is alone the converting and sanctifying Gospel of Christ that has *divine* power to lift the unconverted, vicious Negro out of the slough of his moral degradation, even as it does with the vicious white man or with the depraved heathen in foreign lands. The Negro Missions carried on by our Church for years are being signally blessed. Let us gladly support them with our prayers and contributions.

July 2.

But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, "The harvest, truly, is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." *Matt. 9, 36—38.*

This is not the first time we hear this earnest appeal of our Savior to pray for laborers in His ripening mission-fields. But how are we complying with His request? There are still vast areas in Africa, Asia, and South America untouched by the saving Gospel. There are still vast multitudes in our own country that faint and die for want of the saving means of grace. Why? Because it is so sadly true what an agnostic said to his Christian friend: "If you church-people really took to heart this story of Christ's love for sinners, the very ground would burn under your feet, and you wouldn't rest until you had told it to every man alive." It is true, every Christian cannot be a called and ordained preacher of the Gospel, but every Christian, and therefore you and I, can and ought often and earnestly to plead the cause of our Savior's mission-fields at the throne of divine mercy and zealously beseech the Lord, especially in these days, when so many mission-festivals are held throughout our Church, to send pious and efficient reapers into His harvest-fields. Let us never forget that it is the Lord who gives the Gospel and must send forth the missionaries. Ps. 68, 11. The more we obey His request and pray for His Gospel-cause, the more will our hearts love it; the more will we be ready to support our poor students studying for the ministry and all our missions at home and abroad. Rich men and women in other denominations support individual missionaries from their own ample funds. Some of them, fired with love for Christ and His glorious Gospel, forsake father and mother and home and luxurious living and go into the harvest-field themselves. May we, too, become ever more willing to make such sacrifices and thereby prove the earnestness of our Christian profession!

Hark! the voice of Jesus crying,
 "Who will go and work to-day?
 Fields are white and harvests waiting,
 Who will bear the sheaves away?"
 Loud and long the Master calleth,
 Rich reward He offers thee;
 Who will answer, gladly saying,
 "Here I am; send me, send me!"?

July 3.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3, 16.*

The devil knows no greater trick than to make sinners believe that God *hates* them, when, in fact, God *loves* them. For what is this world that God loves so marvelously that He gives His Son to die for it in order to save it? It is a world of *sinners*. Yet all the iniquity, the idolatry, the ingratitude, and the enmity of which the world was and is guilty could not kill God's love for it. The wicked world could and did kill God's only Son, but it could not and did not kill God's saving love. Whosoever (O blessed *whosoever!*) learns to believe in that burning love of God for sinners and makes the crucified Savior his Savior by faith, shall not perish, no matter how vile he may be, but he shall escape death and have everlasting life. A young soldier was shot on the battle-field, and a comrade dragged him aside to die. He shut his eyes, and all his past life flashed before him. In the gaiety of life he had forgotten his God and Savior. Now his many sins, like so many weights, seemed to sink him deeper and deeper into everlasting perdition. Then the only legacy which his pious mother had left him came to his mind. It was this thrilling Bible-verse of God's love which his mother had taught him at her knee. He caught at it as at a saving rope let down from heaven. "Lord, I believe," he cried; "save me for Jesus' sake or I perish!" That was his dying prayer, a prayer never uttered by a penitent soul in vain. We—you and I—are sinners whom God loves so marvelously in His dear Son. Do we believe and rejoice in that saving love? If so, our hearts must fill with burning gratitude, and we cannot do otherwise—we will daily give ourselves anew to God a living sacrifice. "Love so amazing, so divine, Demands our soul, our life, our all."

Thy life was given for me,
Thy blood, O Lord, was shed
That I might ransomed be
And quickened from the dead.
Thy life was given for me:
What have I given for Thee?

And Thou hast brought to me,
Down from Thy home above,
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love.
Great gifts Thou broughtest me:
What have I brought to Thee?

Oh, let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent!
World-fetters all be riven,
And pain with joy be blent!
Thou gavest Thyself for me:
I give myself to Thee.

July 4.

Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. *Prov. 14, 34.*

This is Independence Day, and we will pray for our dear country: Almighty and everlasting God, Thou righteous Judge of all the earth. The nations of the world are before Thee as clay is in the potter's hands. Thou didst bring our oppressed and persecuted forefathers into this goodly Western World and didst create us a free and independent nation on this ever memorable and happy day. Through Thy gracious and fostering providence we have grown to be a great and mighty people. Though our sins are many and justly deserve Thy righteous punishments, Thou hast spared us in Thy great mercy and hast preserved unto us our beloved Union with its priceless civil and religious liberty. We thank and praise Thee, on this birthday of our country, for the matchless and boundless mercies Thou hast so unceasingly showered on us and our children in this land of peace and plenty. Oh, we beseech Thee in the name of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through whom alone Thy saving blessings come upon us, to pardon and to save us still and to cause Thy holy Word to be preached among us in all its converting and sanctifying power, that the hearts of all our citizens may be inclined toward Thee and we all may live in true faith before Thee and walk in Thy fear and keep Thy statutes and commandments. Endow our legislatures, both National and State, with wisdom from on high that they may ever pass only such laws as are just in Thy holy sight and redound to the peace and welfare of our beloved country. Bless our President and all other executive officers, all judges and magistrates, that they may execute our laws without fear or favor, knowing that they judge not for man, but for Thee, the sovereign Judge of all, who art with them in the judgment. Preserve unto us the purity of the ballot, the lawful liberty of speech, and the sanctity of our homes. Suppress all secret plottings against the free institutions and the peace and prosperity of our dear land and take us into Thy safe-keeping now and forevermore. Hear us as we pray:—

God of Nations, be Thou with us,
Make us just and wise and strong,
Worthy of dear Freedom's banner,
Help us right each tyrant wrong!

Fill our hearts with love and virtue,
Righteousness with us increase;
God of Nations, make our homeland
Evermore the home of peace!

(F. W. H.)

July 5.

Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them!" *Luke 15, 1. 2.*

Yes, — glory to God! — it is true, that this man, this Jesus, receiveth sinners, even the vilest and most notorious among them, because He would help them from their sins and save them. Ah, He will do more than receive them now and eat with them. He will take all their many crimson sins on Himself and pay for their blood-red guilt with His own precious, holy blood on the accursed tree of the cross and thus free them from the curse and punishment, win for them forgiveness with God, make them children of saving grace, companions of the holy angels, lovers of righteousness, heirs of everlasting life. And what shall we say to the Pharisees in our text? We shall say to them: Your sneering remarks have become the glorious song of adoring saints in heaven, the grateful hymn of all penitent and pardoned sinners on earth. Your sinful pride keeps you from repenting of your sins. But know, except you repent as do these publicans and sinners, except you come to Jesus and hear from Him the saving Gospel of God's mercy and forgiveness for His sake, you will all perish miserably and helplessly in your sins. All your boasted morality, your theoretical knowledge of Moses and the prophets, will not save you then, it will rather increase your guilt and punishment; for the servant that knew his master's will, yet did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. *Luke 12, 47.* You knew God's will that you should repent of your sins. So many sweet Gospel-promises in Moses and the prophets exhorted you to do so. But you refused, refused even to listen to your Savior's call to repentance. Oh, we will let your sad and terrible example be a warning to us and will pray God to open our hearts that we may not hear His Word in vain, nor trust in our own goodness, nor be satisfied with our orthodox Bible-knowledge, but in true repentance daily come to Jesus and make Him, the sinners' Friend, our Friend, our Savior, in life, in death, to all eternity.

Come, ye sinners, one and all,
Come, ye all have invitation;
Come, obey His gracious call,
Come and take His free salvation!
Firmly in these words believe:
"Jesus sinners doth receive!"

I, a sinner, come to Thee
And acknowledge my transgression;
Tender mercy show to me,
Grant me graciously remission;
Let these words my soul relieve:
"Jesus sinners doth receive!"

July 6.

I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. *Luke 15, 7.*

The holy angels know our heavenly Father's good and gracious will that no sinner should perish, but come to repentance and be saved. They therefore rejoice when they see this will of God accomplished in a sinner on earth. Above all do they know how much it cost God's dear Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to save us lost sinners, how He suffered and died for us. They know that He is the Good Shepherd, who seeks the lost, straying sheep by calling them through His Gospel, shirking no pain, no trouble, until He finds them and brings them into the protecting fold of His Church. They rejoice when His labor is rewarded by the saving of one single soul. How that blessed truth ought ever to encourage our faithful missionaries and pastors when it seems to them that all their labor in the Lord's Gospel-cause is in vain or brings but very little fruit! How precious *one soul* is in the sight of God, if all heaven is filled with joy at the news of a sinner's conversion! And now we know that God's saving Word is never preached in vain by His servants. — By the ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance the Lord evidently refers to the scoffing Pharisees, to all self-righteous persons, who think they do not need to repent, nor need to be forgiven, and want to know nothing of Jesus as their Savior. What blind people they are! But how about us? Have God's holy angels ever rejoiced over us because we have learned to repent sincerely and believingly over our sins? May the great love that Jesus has for all lost sinners and in which He even died for them melt our hearts and draw us daily to Him in loving and adoring faith!

Sheep that from the fold did stray
Every faithful shepherd seeketh;
Weary souls that lost their way
Christ the Shepherd seeks and taketh
In His arms that they may live —
"Jesus sinners doth receive!"

Now my conscience is at ease,
Now I fear no condemnation:
He who grants me full release
Hath atoned for my transgression.
In true faith to Him I cleave —
"Jesus sinners doth receive!"

July 7.

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

Luke 15, 8. 9.

Our Lord here emphasizes the painstaking care with which He seeks and saves that which is lost, and again teaches us what great value a single soul has in the eyes of God. If God, if Jesus, if the angels in heaven rejoice when sin-lost souls are saved by faith in their Redeemer and are made blessed heirs of heaven, ought we not rejoice when we read of the success of our Gospel-missions among the heathen or the Negroes or the outcasts in our big cities? There would be more love among us for the Savior's mission-work if more of us would read our church-papers more diligently that bring us news from our mission-fields. Robert Maguire has some very fine verses on "The Lost Piece of Money" as mentioned in the Savior's parable, which we will read:—

'Tis lost! one silvered treasure of the ten,
From the lone widow's scanty stock and store;
For this she searched with diligence, and then,
Soon as she found it, she rejoiced the more,
Not for the nine, but for the tenth, the lost,
She sought, and sighed, and agonized the most.

For this she lit the candle and the light,
And sought and searched in every darkened place;
For this she swept till, brought at last to sight,
Joy beamed upon the anxious widow's face.
Who have but little have the less to share;
And loss of aught is more than they can spare.

Like that lost coin, the soul by nature lies
In dark and dust, all-passive of its state;
Unsought, it cannot of itself arise;
Unfound, abides unconscious of its fate;
Such loss to lose, but, oh! such gain to find;
How great the love of Jesus and how kind!

His fold is but a "little flock," indeed;
His sheep are numbered, like the widow's gain;
One lost is missed, and must be sought in speed,
Till, found, He brings it to the fold again.
Rejoice with Me; that which was lost is found;
Like angels' joy, so let your joy abound!

July 8.

The fruit of the Spirit is love. *Gal. 5, 22.*

“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another,” our Savior says, John 13, 35. What is this love that proves to the world whether a man is a Christian or not? Our Lord tells us very plainly through His inspired Apostle Paul: “Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” 1 Cor. 13, 4—7. In vain do we look for such unselfish, humble, patient love among the children of this world. They have, it is true, much natural affection for their families and friends, they also extend charity toward their suffering fellow-men; but the pure, unselfish, holy affection that marks a true Christian in all his relations to his fellow-men, in which he stands ready to help and serve and save even his enemies,—such love is produced alone by God’s Holy Spirit dwelling in a heart that has accepted the crucified Redeemer as its own in living faith. “Behold how they love one another!” the heathen cried in amazement when they saw the deep, self-sacrificing love the first Christians had to each other. Such burning affection for our fellow-redeemed, especially for those who are of the same household of faith, is growing less and less among us Christians of these last, evil days. And yet this unselfish, self-sacrificing affection is an unfailing thermometer marking the true state of our faith. “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” Let us daily kindle our weak and waning love for our fellow-men, especially for our fellow-Christians, under the cross of that divine Love that died for us while we were yet sinners.

Thou sweetest Love, grace on us bestow;
Set our hearts with heavenly fire aglow
That with hearts united we love each other,
Of one mind, in peace with every brother.
Lord, have mercy!

July 9.

This is my comfort in my affliction; for Thy Word hath quickened me. *Ps. 119, 50.*

We Christians so often forget the fact that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world; that we have here no continuing city, but have our true home in heaven. Has not our blessed Savior given us the unfailing promise: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that, where I am, there ye may be also"? Yet we forget this sweet truth so often and then are in great danger of becoming "naturalized" in this wicked world and of no longer "pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." *Phil. 3, 14.* But if we forget, there is One who does not forget us nor leave us to perish in our danger. Our faithful God and Savior comes to our rescue with many and tearful afflictions that teach us to see and realize the vanity of all earthly things. But while thus correcting and chastising us, He also comforts us. In His precious Word He comes to us in our suffering and quickens our drooping faith and hope, enlivens and kindles anew our love for Him and our better and abiding home above. His blessed Word is no empty sound and no dead letter, but divine truth and power and spirit and life. Aye, He Himself becomes our "Comforter," our One and All, for whom our heart longs and yearns with passionate love, declaring with Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever." *Ps. 73, 25.* Let us, therefore, daily read and hear His quickening Word with a heart hungering for His loving, comforting presence, and we shall gratefully declare with David: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the Health of my countenance and my God." *Ps. 42, 11.*

Thy Word doth move the inmost heart,
Thy Word doth perfect health impart,
Thy Word my soul with joy doth bless,
Thy Word brings peace and blessedness.

July 10.

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. *Is. 55, 6—9.*

In this golden text we hear the very pulse-beat of God's love for sinners. Sin-depraved man goes his own ways, follows his own carnal thoughts, and seeks only his temporal welfare and happiness. Left to these self-chosen ways of his, man would perish in his sins and be forever lost to the higher and blessed destiny God has prepared for him in His great love and mercy. So the merciful God comes to man in His regenerating Word and exhorts him to turn from his sinful ways and to seek Him, his Maker and his Savior, while there is still life and he can still find his all-gracious Lord. But when the blind sinner's eyes are opened, when he sees how sinful and wicked his ways are in the sight of the holy God, he cannot conclude otherwise than that God hates him and must punish him on account of his sins. In his terror he now wants to flee from God. However, God assures him in the most loving and endearing terms: "No, poor, trembling sinner; your thoughts concerning Me again are altogether wrong. Do not run away, but come to My arms. I have far different thoughts toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil. No matter how wicked or unrighteous you are, return to Me, and I will abundantly pardon all your sins. Not one shall remain to condemn you. From eternity My heart has loved you in My dear Son, your Savior; and if you accept My pardon in Him, you shall joyfully see that My thoughts and ways—though you may not be able to comprehend them because they are higher than the heavens—will finally lead you to heaven." Oh, what a gracious and merciful God we have in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us ever seek and find Him while He is so near also for us in His saving Word.

Now I have found the sure foundation,
Where evermore my anchor grounds!
It lay there ere the world's creation,
Where else but in my Savior's wounds?
Foundation which unmoved shall stay
When earth and heaven pass away.

July 11.

And it came to pass that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." And Jesus said unto him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." *Luke 9, 57. 58.*

It is, indeed, a blessed thing to follow the Lord Jesus; but so many, like the man in our text, want to follow Him from selfish motives, from the hope of gaining some earthly profit and reward. To all such the warning words of our Lord Jesus apply: "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." He is poorer than the hunted beasts of the forest or the birds of the air. He does not own a foot of soil, but is a homeless wanderer and stranger in this world. He has no riches to offer His followers; He promises them no high stations of honor, no peaceful days of earthly joy and happiness. To go with Him means to go into poverty, into self-denial, to bear the cross, to suffer, and to die with Him. Are you ready to do that? Alas! so many refuse to become like the poor and lowly Jesus in this world; but they that do, oh, how rich and blessed He makes them! For He gives them what transcends all the treasures of this passing world — *He gives them Himself* with all the riches of His saving truth and grace and comfort and mercy. "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life." *Matt. 19, 29.* In His blessed companionship His followers find the deepest longings of their soul fully and supremely satisfied, find life, true life, and sweet communion with God, and immortality in death. Who, then, would not follow Jesus?

O Jesus, Thou hast promised
To all who follow Thee
That where Thou art in glory,
There shall Thy servant be;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Oh, give me grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend!

Oh, let me see Thy footmarks
And in them plant my own!
My hope to follow duly
Is in Thy strength alone.
Oh, guide me, call me, draw me,
Uphold me to the end!
At last in heaven receive me,
My Savior and my Friend!

July 12.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Rom. 8, 26.

It often happens that sorely afflicted children of God are stricken dumb by their grief and their lips can utter no prayer. It is then that God's Holy Spirit makes His presence felt in their overburdened hearts and out of their stony griefs raises a Bethel, a house of God, a gate of heaven. Commenting on this passage of Holy Scripture, the late Phillips Brooks says: "The word 'helpeth' means 'to lay hold of along with another,' and the thought suggested is that of a man bearing a burden too heavy for him. The load is becoming more and more oppressive, and he falters and turns faint and is about to sink under the intolerable weight, when a loving and strong friend steps forward and lifts the burden and relieves the weary one and enables him to carry that which seemed like a mountain. Almost crushed, the heavy-laden soul cannot pray, but only groan; and yet the groan in dumb, inarticulate language is also a prayer, the fruit of the Spirit's intercession for him and within him." To a child of God painfully and slowly dying from cancer who complained that she could not pray in her agony her pastor said: "You can groan, can't you?" "Oh, yes," she answered, "my days and nights are passed in groaning." "Well," said he, "never mind your prayers, then; your groans going up to God reach His ear and heart far more surely than the most eloquent prayer, for they are the Spirit's intercession in your behalf." One groan borne upward by the Holy Spirit is worth a thousand wordy prayers; "and He that searcheth the hearts," that is, the Lord, "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." *Rom. 8, 27.*

Hope on, thou heart, grief-riven,
Hope and courageous be;
Where anguish thee hath driven
Thou shalt deliverance see.
God from thy pit of sadness
Shall raise thee graciously;
Wait, and the sun of gladness
Thine eyes shall early see.

July 13.

Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

Luke 6, 36. 37.

Like father, like child. If the merciful God is our Father, we, His children, will also be merciful. And we will show our merciful disposition in our conduct toward our erring brethren. God's great, undeserved, and tireless mercy toward us will be our pattern in our dealings with them. Our heavenly Father bears so patiently with us and our sinful weakness, does not harshly condemn us on account of our manifold sins, but forgives us daily and richly all our faults for Jesus' sake. So we are to bear our neighbor's faults, and when he wrongs us, we must not avenge ourselves, but forgive him with a loving, merciful heart. However, we are not to condone evil and call wrong right. Our Savior does not forbid without distinction all judging and condemning. Judges and magistrates must condemn and punish crime. God has given them the sword for that purpose. Parents and teachers load a fearful responsibility on their conscience when they let the sins of their children and pupils go unpunished, as did Eli with his wicked sons. Pastors are charged with the solemn duty to condemn all sin and unrighteousness by virtue of their holy office, and Christian congregations must by Christ's command exclude public and impenitent sinners until they repent. But here the Lord forbids all *uncharitable* judging and condemning, of which even Christians are often guilty in their conduct toward their fellow-men. Oh, what envy, what hatred, what contention in families and congregations, even suing in court, this uncharitable judging and condemning provokes! And how little we guard against this sin in our private conversations! How hard it is for us to forgive and forget a wrong! Pray God we all may grow more merciful, even as He is merciful; that we may ever defend our slandered neighbor, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything, and forgive him as we want God to forgive us.

O let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth;
Grant that no idle word
From out my mouth proceedeth;
And grant, when in my place
I must and ought to speak,
My words due power and grace,
Nor let me wound the weak.

July 14.

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. *Gal. 5, 22.*

Boisterous mirth does not in itself betray great joy. Many a man sings and laughs and dances on his way through life whose mind is tortured with guilt and fear. "The wicked rejoice; but their joy is simply like letting off fireworks—they blaze away and seem to put the modest little stars to shame. But it is all for a little while; they are over in a moment, while the quiet stars are shining still." The only people that possess true, abiding joy in this world of sin and sorrow are the Christians; for dwelling in their heart is God's Holy Spirit, who causes them to "rejoice in the Lord alway," even in the days of darkest sorrow. And why should we Christians not always rejoice in our blessed Lord and Savior? Does He not bless us with a good conscience by forgiving us all our sins? Is He not with us every day and hour of our life, helping, guiding, comforting, and saving us to the end? Where you find Christians who are always complaining about their hard lot in life, who never have a smile or a pleasant word for their neighbors, you can be sure that they are people who, though they have put their hands to the plow, look regretfully back to the fleeting things of this world and are therefore not fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9, 62. For the kingdom of God consists not in eating and drinking, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Healthy children are always joyful and happy. Even so healthy, childlike faith always rejoices in its Savior, no matter how dark the valley through which it is led by His gracious hand.

I will sing my Maker's praises
And in Him most joyful be,
For in all things I see traces
Of His tender love to me.
Nothing else but love could move Him,
With such sweet and tender care
Evermore to raise and bear
All who try to serve and love Him.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.
On this thought I dwell with pleasure;
For it granteth joy and peace.
Christ's cross hath its time and measure
And at last will wholly cease.
When the winter disappeareth,
Lovely summer comes again;
Joy is giv'n for woe and pain
Who His cross in patience beareth.
All things else have but their day,
God's great love abides for aye.

July 15.

I am the true Vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. *John 15, 1. 2.*

“Is He a Vine? His heavenly root Supplies the boughs with life and fruit. O let a lasting union join My soul, the branch, to Christ, the Vine.” Thus the poet sings. But it is just for that reason that the Lord, our God, visits us so often with painful affliction, that He may cement our union with our blessed Savior. It may seem painful and destructive to the vine when the gardener comes along with his sharp pruning-knife and cuts away so many of its luxuriant shoots and branches. But the wise gardener knows if he left his vines untrimmed, they would soon run wild and bring forth inferior fruit. So he trims the vine and cuts away all unnecessary wood. Why? That the sun can shine on the grapes and ripen and sweeten them. With the same wise purpose in view our heavenly Father cuts away with His knife of affliction the wild, sinful shoots in our hearts, purges them from the love of self and of the world, that the sun of His saving grace might ripen and sweeten in us more and more the fruits of true righteousness and piety. It is not punishment for our sins, as we often despondingly think in our affliction, that causes these painful experiences to befall us, but it is “pruning” by our heavenly Father, who loves us and therefore cannot mean our hurt, but has our good in view. And what comfort it is to hear that it is just the “branch that beareth fruit” which He thus prunes and afflicts. O let us not resist the wise and loving design of our heavenly Father! Let us humbly submit to His afflictions and through them draw nearer and nearer to our Savior and abide in Him; for the branch that beareth not fruit is finally taken away and cast into the fire. V. 6.

From God shall naught divide me,
For He is true for aye
And on my path will guide me,
Who else should often stray;
His ever-bounteous hand
By night and day is heedful
And gives me what is needful
Where'er I go or stand.

If sorrow comes, He sent it,
In Him I put my trust;
I never shall repent it,
For He is true and just
And endeth every ill;
My life and soul I render
To God, my strong Defender,
Let Him do as He will.

July 16.

Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory. *Ps. 73, 23. 24.*

In our text we hear the exultant voice of sorely tried, but *nevertheless* victorious faith. Asaph, the God-inspired singer of this immortal psalm, has pondered an old, old question that so often fills the heart of God's children with doubt and perplexity. It concerns God's moral government of this present world. The wicked, who so insolently defy God and His holy Law, grow rich and prosper, whereas the pious, who fear God and love His Word, are often in great trouble, down-trodden, and poor. How do these glaring inconsistencies agree with God's truth and justice? Is it worth while to lead a pious, God-fearing life? Asaph confesses that the problem was too deep for him and nearly caused him to fall away from his God. But in his perplexity he went into the sanctuary, there to commune with God. And there all his doubts and fears were quieted. For God opened his eyes to see how all the boasted prosperity of the wicked was but a fleeting shadow, a dangerous illusion. Though God seemed to sleep and permit evil to triumph for a while, He would finally awake and cast the wicked down into destruction and uphold His own truth and justice. Does not all history prove and substantiate what God told Asaph and what He still tells us in His sanctuary, His holy and infallible Word? If we have ever doubted the wisdom and justice of His divine government, let us repent and confess our folly, as did Job and as does Asaph in this psalm, and with him declare: "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee," O my faithful and merciful God! *With Thee* wherever Thou dost lead me. Thy right hand upholds me, and Thy divine counsel shall guide me through all my life; and afterwards Thou shalt receive me into everlasting glory, where all the dark riddles of my life shall find their satisfactory solution.

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be!
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out my path for me.
I dare not choose my lot:
I would not, if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

Choose Thou for me my friends,
My sickness or my health;
Choose Thou my cares for me,
My poverty or wealth.
Not mine, not mine, the choice,
In things or great or small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom and my All.

July 17.

As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. *1 Pet. 2, 2. 3.*

By faith we are born again and made blessed children of God. But we are not to remain “babes,” weak and feeble in faith, but are to grow in the knowledge of saving truth and to walk securely and firmly in the ways of God. As new-born babes can thrive only on pure milk, so our faith can grow strong only through the “sincere milk of the Word”; and we shall hunger for it and never grow tired of it, no matter how old we grow in years, if we have tasted how gracious the Lord has been to us. Good, pure milk gives new life and strength even to old men and women. Now, there is a precious little book that contains the sincere milk of the faith-sustaining Word of God in most palatable form. That book is known as *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Leopold Ranke, the great historian, writes of this blessed book: “The Catechism which Luther published in 1529, and of which he says that, as old a Doctor as he was, he himself used it as his prayer, is as childlike as it is profound, as easy of grasp as it is unfathomable, as simple as it is sublime. Happy the man who nourishes his soul with it, who clings to it! For every moment he possesses a changeless consolation; he has under a thin shell that kernel of truth which is enough for the wisest of the wise.” This little book has proved of inestimable blessing to the Church in the past. It has been very aptly called the “layman’s Bible,” for it planted the knowledge of Christ’s saving truth in the hearts of countless millions of the common people. If things in the Church nowadays are to change for the better, we shall have to return to a more devoted use of the Catechism in our homes, in our Sunday-schools, and in our churches. The prevailing indifference to pure Gospel-doctrine in many Lutheran church-bodies, the woeful ignorance of even the simplest Bible-truths we meet with so often are chiefly due to our sad neglect of the Catechism. We parents, teachers, and, above all, our *pastors* must learn to *drill* the Catechism into our children and people, as did our Lutheran forefathers, who thought so highly of the precious little book that they made it one of the Confessions of our Church.

Lord, grant that we e’er pure retain
The catechismal doctrine plain
As Luther taught the heavenly truth
In simple words to tender youth.

July 18.

And God said unto Moses, **"I AM THAT I AM."** *Ex. 3, 14.*

"I Am hath sent me," that was the answer Moses was to give if any doubted the authority of his mission to them. "I Am," the one absolute Being; the one and only God, who was and is and shall be: "I Am," the one God from eternity to eternity, eternal, unchangeable in His word and promises, as well as in His nature; the Creator of all; the Lord over all; the one Lord God, in whom all live and move and have their being; the one God, outside of whom there can be no other gods; the One who alone and unconditionally can say, "I am"; the One who alone has the right to command and the power to execute His threats and fulfil His promises; the only One who is able to save and to destroy. — Yea, where begin and where end? This one name "I Am" includes every attribute of God. I am — eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, holy, just, faithful, benevolent, merciful, gracious. What a comprehensive name, and, oh, how precious to the believer! "I Am," that is His name, and the believer has but to add to "I Am" anything which exactly suits his own spiritual need, whatever it may be, and, behold, the Lord God is that to him. To the believer He is all in all. He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. This name "I Am" offers all, and faith has but to write over against that precious name whatever it needs, and faith has it. — "I Am" — is this name a precious sound to your ears, or do you tremble at the very thought of what this name all signifies? Do you find peace, comfort, hope in this name? Is He who calls Himself "I Am" your Savior? Is He your Righteousness, so that you can stand before Him and not be found wanting on that day? If you believe, then you need not fear. He who calls Himself "I Am" is then your Wisdom, your Righteousness, your Sanctification, your Redemption. As a believer you can in a measure feel and enjoy the sweetness of this ineffable name — "I Am." (*H. H., in Lutheran Witness, 1919.*)

When God would teach mankind His name,
He calls Himself the great "I Am"
And leaves a blank — believers may
Supply those things for which they pray.

July 19.

Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord. *Lam. 3, 39. 40.*

There is so much complaining and fretting among men nowadays over evil conditions prevailing in the world and in their lives, and yet there is but one misfortune that they ought to complain about, and that is—their sin. Sin separates between us and our God, the Giver of every good gift, and brings down upon us His just punishments. It is sin that makes the night of affliction so dark and our burden so heavy. We often complain that we are so poor in this world's goods, when we ought to complain against our covetous heart that will not be content with the food and raiment God provides. We murmur because we have no brilliant intellectual gifts, when we ought to murmur against the sinful pride living in our hearts. We fret over enemies we may have, over so many hardships and misfortunes that come upon us, when we ought to fret about our stubborn and perverse heart, which will not believe that all these things are sent upon us by the wise, merciful, and omnipotent God. In short, it is sin, *our sin*, that we ought to complain about more than about misfortunes and afflictions. Therefore let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord when assailed by doubt and fear. Let us ever remember that it is the Lord who thus afflicts us because He would purge us from sin, which so easily besets us and would prove our destruction if He did not free us from its evil power. He knows our inmost hearts and sees what sinful desires still lurk in their secret folds, often unknown to ourselves. He therefore casts us into the fiery furnace of affliction that our faith be cleansed from all attaching dross and be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1, 7.

Father, whate'er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at Thy throne of grace
Let this petition rise:

Give me a calm and thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The blessings of Thy grace impart
And make me live to Thee.

Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine
My path of life attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine
And crown my journey's end.

July 20.

The fruit of the Spirit is peace. *Gal. 5, 22.*

Because the Spirit of the Prince of Peace dwells in the hearts of believing Christians, they approve themselves children of peace. They show no envious, quarrelsome disposition, as do the contentious children of this world. They would rather suffer wrong than do wrong and often forfeit their just rights rather than go to law or quarrel with their neighbor. Moved by their Savior's Spirit, they even love their enemies, bless those that curse them, do good to those that hate them, and will pray for them which despitefully use them and persecute them, that they may be obedient children of their Father which is in heaven. *Matt. 5, 44. 45.* As much as lies in them, they live peaceably with all men, forego wrath and vengeance, and are not overcome of evil, but overcome evil by doing good. Even where they contend for the faith as committed once unto the saints, where they zealously defend the pure Gospel-truth and denounce all false doctrine and ungodly life, they do so with a loving heart and have but one blessed purpose, namely, to bring their erring brethren to Him who alone is our Peace and who alone can give abiding peace to the troubled conscience and bring the sinner to true peace with God. So many misguided Christians nowadays are crying: "Peace! Peace! Let all warring denominations bury their differences and unite in one common *liberal* faith and one outwardly peaceful Church." But such peace means the grave of the Gospel, it means death to the sinner's hope of salvation in the free grace of Christ. God save us from such a graveyard peace and endow us with the Spirit of our blessed Lord that we may ever acquit ourselves like children of His saving peace amid the clamor of this quarrelsome and contentious world.

All love is Thine, O Spirit;
Thou hatest enmity;
Thou lovest peace and friendship,
All strife wouldst have us flee;
Where wrath and discord reign
Thy whisper inly pleadeth
And to the heart that heedeth
Brings love and light again.

O Holy Spirit, hear us
And make our sorrow cease,
Thy scattered flock restore now
To union, joy, and peace;
Bid flourish once again
The lands by men forsaken,
The churches spoiled and shaken
By war's unhallowed train.

July 21.

My son, give Me thine heart and let thine eyes observe My ways. *Prov. 23, 26.*

Infinite Love and Purity here pleads for the gift of our impure, sin-corrupted hearts. Oh, what loving condescension of the holy God! We often think ourselves so good and virtuous because in our blind conceit we do not know ourselves, our own evil hearts. But is it not a true picture which Jesus draws of the human heart, and therefore also of our heart, when He says, Matt. 15, 19: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"? And these vile hearts of ours the pure and holy God asks as a gift from us! Why? O Love Divine, all love excelling! He would cleanse them from their defiling deadly sins and make them His holy abode, where He would dwell with all His blessing, purifying, saving love. Can we refuse to give Him these sinful hearts of ours, to love Him, and to go the ways He teaches us in His holy Law and leads us in His all-wise and benevolent dispensations? Look to the cross on Calvary. See how God Himself there, in His dear Son, dies and atones for our sins that we might not die, but live, live in His holy, blessed communion in this world and in the world to come. Oh, what do so many wayward sons and daughters gain who give their hearts to the fickle, sinful world instead of giving them to their loving God and Savior! Alas! they gain only an evil conscience, very often a life of bitter remorse and shame, and — oh, the pity, the pity! — like Judas, even a suicide's grave. Oh, may we all this day and all other days of our life listen to the pleading of our merciful God and give our hearts to Him in loving and obedient faith. Happy shall we be then and blessed forevermore.

Soul, what return has God, thy Savior,
For all He gives thee day by day?
O hast thou in thy gift a favor
That can delight and please Him? — say!
The best of offerings He requires —
Give Him thy heart with its desires.
Accept the gift which Thou requirest,
The first-fruits of my heart, O God!
The offerings Thou so much desirest
And dearly paid'st for with Thy blood;
To Thee alone I now resign
My heart, to be forever Thine.
Whom should I give my heart's affection
But Thee, who givest Thine to faith?
Thy fervent love is my protection:
Lord, Thou hast loved me unto death.
My heart with Thine shall ever be
One heart throughout eternity.

July 22.

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord, his God; who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; who keepeth truth forever. *Ps. 146, 5. 6.*

Even such a hero of faith as Luther was can at times forget to trust implicitly in his faithful God and His saving help. The consequence is unhappiness. The story goes of Luther's being in low spirits for a time. In vain his good wife tried to cheer him. At last she put on a widow's weeds and went about the house in deepest mourning. "Who's dead?" asked Luther. "God," replied Kate. "Don't talk foolish!" retorted the great Reformer. "My dear Doctor," answered Kate, "you act so downhearted and despondent and will listen to no comfort that I naturally concluded God must be dead, and so I dressed in mourning!" Luther understood the point, laughingly embraced his good wife, and forgot his "blues." Why should we Christians ever give way to these feelings of despondency? Is it not gloriously true what our psalm tells us about our God and Savior? Where is there a trouble from which He cannot help us — the almighty Creator of heaven and earth? And can we ever doubt His willingness to help and save when He has given us such clear promises in His infallible Word? He keepeth truth forever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the Word of our God shall never pass away. Then let us hope and trust in Him whose helping love no limit knows, with whom nothing is impossible.

God liveth still!
Soul, despair not, fear no ill!
God is good; from His compassion
Earthly help and comfort flow;
Strong is His right hand to fashion
All things well for man below;
Trial, oft the most distressing,
In the end has proved a blessing.
Wherefore, then, my soul, despair?
God still lives, who heareth prayer.

God liveth still!
Soul, despair not, fear no ill!
Is thy cross too great and pond'rous,
Cast on Him thy grievous load;
God is great, His love is wondrous,
He will speed thee on the road.
For His truth endureth ever,
And His mercy ceaseth never.
Wherefore, then, my soul, despair?
God still lives, who heareth prayer.

July 23.

And Simon, answering, said unto Him, "Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net." And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes. *Luke 5, 5. 6.*

Here we have the answer to the question why so many men, in spite of all their attempts, never get ahead in the world. Though they work from morning till night, Sunday and every other day; though they scheme and scrimp and slave, they remain poor and can never make ends meet. Many of them grow bitter on that account, envy their more successful neighbors, and even turn anarchists. Yet they have no one but themselves to blame for their unfortunate lot. "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich," as we see again so clearly from our text. But these ambitious, yet luckless toilers think they can get along without God and His blessing. They have no time to go to church and hear God's saving Word, no time to pray and ask Him for help and for blessing on their work. In their blind pride they will trust alone in their own powers, their own wisdom, their own endeavors and — meet with failure. "For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." — It is true, Peter's experience here in our text is often repeated also in the lives of present-day Christians. They at times meet with little or no success, though they toil faithfully at their calling. But in such lean and meager days the Word of their God proves of unfailing comfort and help to them. They know that their faithful God and Father in heaven will not let them starve, but will bless and multiply their scanty provisions in the house, as He did the widow's cruse of oil, and will in due time also reward their labor with greater prosperity. That blessed trust gives them a cheerful and courageous heart faithfully to carry on their God-given work. It safeguards them against a rampant, seditious spirit, which also threatens our dear country with disaster and ruin. Let us make Peter's humble and devout declaration: "Lord, at Thy word I will let down the net," our motto, and God's rich-making blessing will ever be with us.

All depends on our possessing
God's free love and grace and
blessing,
Though all earthly wealth depart.
He who God for his hath taken
'Mid the changing world unshaken
Keeps a free, heroic heart.

He who hitherto hath fed me
And to many a joy hath led me
Is and shall be ever mine;
He who did so gently school me,
He who still doth guide and
rule me,
Will not leave me now to pine.

July 24.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. *Luke 12, 32.*

"I love Thy Zion, Lord, The house of Thine abode, The Church our blest Redeemer saved With His own precious blood." And who would not love the Lord's Zion, His holy Church, with its blessed Gospel of free and saving grace, which is our only hope in life and death? But have we not cause to fear that the Lord's Zion, God's holy temple, in which every believer is a living stone, is facing destruction at the hands of its open and secret enemies in these dangerous and evil days? It is true, God's believing children in this wicked world resemble a little, helpless flock of sheep surrounded by snarling, ravenous wolves. But they have no reason to fear. Their fate lies not in their hands, but in the hands of their reconciled and omnipotent Father in heaven. Nothing can pluck them out of those loving hands. No power on earth or in hell can thwart His holy purpose to give them His Kingdom of Grace here and His Kingdom of Glory hereafter in heaven. Their salvation is assured for time and eternity. Let us but see to it that we are members of Christ's true, believing little flock, then we shall have no cause to fear for our persons or for the Church we love so much. Like soldiers sure of their final victory in the battle we will wage our Savior's battles with unflinching courage and carry on His saving Gospel-work with renewed zeal and energy in spite of all opposition. With God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, on our side, we are in overwhelming majority as compared with our numerous foes. "The kingdom ours remaineth!"

Fear not, O little flock, the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow;
Dread not his rage and power:
What though your courage sometimes faints,
His seeming triumph o'er God's saints
Lasts but a little hour.

Be of good cheer; your cause belongs
To Him who can avenge your wrongs;
Leave it to Him, our Lord.
Though hidden yet from mortal eyes,
His Gideon shall for you arise,
Uphold you and His Word.

July 25.

The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering. *Gal. 5, 22.*

Long-suffering means not to be easily provoked, to bear injuries and wrongs for a long time, to forgive and spare offenders. God is long-suffering with us; He does not deal with us after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities. In fact, God's long-suffering is our salvation, as Peter tells us in his second epistle. If, therefore, God had such patience with us and did not cut us down in His wrath when we proved barren, unfruitful trees, but spared us and continued with His Word and Spirit to convert and save us, should not we be long-suffering also with our erring brethren, patiently bearing with their faults and in all love and gentleness teaching them to do better? A certain mother had to repeat her lesson nineteen times before her little child grasped it. Hearing it, the father exclaimed: "How could you tell the child the same thing over and over again nineteen times?" "Because he had not learned it at the eighteenth time," sweetly replied the patient mother. Many a dull pupil at school has blossomed into a bright scholar because of the infinite pains his faithful, patient teacher took with him. Again, many wayward sons or daughters could have been saved from their downward career if their parents had been more long-suffering with them and had prayed more for them. "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." Prov. 15, 1. Many a man could have been won as a friend, even kept with the Church, if, instead of upbraiding and angry words, he had heard a kind and forgiving word in season. While regarding the mote in our brother's eye, let us not forget the beam in our own eye. Let us ever remember how much we need the long-suffering mercy of our God and Savior. As His redeemed children let us reveal the same patient spirit toward our fellow-men. "The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering."

How can I thank Thee, Lord,
For all Thy loving-kindness?
Thou hast so long a time
Had patience with my blindness
When dead in many sins
And trespasses I lay,
And kindled, holy God,
Thine anger every day.

Lord, Thou hast shown to me
Divine commiseration:
I persevered in sin,
But Thou in great compassion;
I did resist Thee, Lord,
Deferring to repent;
Thou didst defer Thy wrath
And instant punishment.

July 26.

I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. *Ps. 16, 8.*

This 16th Psalm is, indeed, a “golden Psalm of David,” as its original heading reads. It is full of humble, golden trust in our gracious God. Its very first note sounds so peacefully and confidently: “Preserve me, O God; for in Thee do I put my trust.” David knows, as Luther did in his day: “With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected” in the dangers and temptations of this evil world. Foes of deep guile and great might surround us from without and within, and soon were we overpowered if we had to fight our battles alone. But David knows where to find help. He turns to His merciful and omnipotent Father in heaven and prays: “Preserve me, O God; for in Thee do I put my trust,” and declares in this 8th verse that he does so always and that through God’s help he is preserved in life’s turmoil and sin. Happy are we if we make this word of the psalmist our watchword and always set the Lord before us as our Guide and Protector, if we suffer His Word and Holy Spirit to rule our hearts and lives. Then shall we not be moved, no matter what trials or temptations befall us. Though a host of enemies rise against us, we shall be safe; for the Lord is at our right hand. The right hand is the hand of power, of strength for battle. So the Lord Himself battles for us, shields and protects us, that we may endure unto the end and obtain the victory and gain the crown of everlasting life.

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the waters nearer roll,
While the tempest still is high!
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee:
Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me!
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

July 27.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. *Matt. 5, 20.*

It is easy to be a Pharisee. Why? Because it is so easy to be selfish. Love of self, not the love of God, constrains your Pharisee to lead a strict moral life and to do good. His tribe has multiplied exceedingly in our times and waxed great in the Christian world. You will find him even in the Lutheran Church. He conforms his outward life to God's holy commandments, observes Sunday by going to church, comes to the Sacrament, reads his Bible, prays, and helps the poor; and for all this he expects God to reward him with the bliss of heaven. How about us? Let us examine our ways and make very sure why we follow righteousness and lead a Christian life. Though it is easy to be a Pharisee on account of the natural selfishness of the human heart, it is not wise nor safe to be one. This selfish righteousness of the Pharisee, be it ever so subtle, *excludes men from heaven*. True Christian righteousness far exceeds the righteousness of both the ancient and the modern Pharisee. In what way? The answer is: It does not proceed from love of self, but from humble, grateful love of the merciful God in heaven and from unselfish love of your neighbor. Hence Scripture says: "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Rom. 13, 10. Again, Christian righteousness does not keep the Law of God for the purpose of meriting heaven. It knows how deficient it is and builds its hope of heaven alone on Jesus' blood and righteousness. But it is very zealous in striving to obey God's holy Law, for it knows how earnestly its God and Father in heaven demands it. As loving and obedient children of God, Christians follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

I do not come because my soul
Is free from sin, and pure, and
whole,
And worthy of Thy grace;
I do not speak to Thee because
I've ever justly kept Thy laws
And dare to meet Thy face.

I know that sin and guilt combine
To reign o'er every thought of
mine
And turn from good to ill;
I know that when I try to be
Upright and just and true to Thee,
I am a sinner still.

In Christ alone my trust I place —
Come boldly to Thy throne of grace
And there commune with Thee.
Salvation sure, O Lord, is mine,
And, all unworthy, I am Thine,
For Jesus died for me.

July 28.

It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. *Lam. 3, 26.*

Jerusalem, the proud city of David, had fallen before the victorious armies of King Nebuchadnezzar. Its mighty walls and glorious Temple lay in ruins. Its priests and princes and people were led away into the long and shameful captivity of Babylon. Weeping and lamenting its sad fate, Jeremiah sings its funeral song in the five chapters of his book called *Lamentations*. Darkest night is about him, but he knows that the Lord God, whose just anger has destroyed the wicked city, has also given him the promise that in due time the children of Israel shall return from their captivity and again build the walls of Jerusalem. This sure promise of his God is the star of hope that illumines the night about him and cheers his grieving heart. Now he will quietly wait for its fulfilment. Here we see what patient hope and constant faith mean for our Christian life. This patient hope is not a dull resignation to the unchangeable sorrowful conditions in which we may find ourselves, but it is a sure and lively trust in the promised help of our God, which cannot fail us. And, oh, it is a good thing; for with its sweet songs of God's unfailing love and approaching help it comforts the grieving heart, gives new courage to the despairing mind, overcomes all enervating fear, bears you triumphantly out of the Slough of Despond, and shortens the long night of waiting.

Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings;
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.

In holy contemplation
We sweetly then pursue
The theme of God's salvation
And find it ever new;
Set free from present sorrow,
We cheerfully can say,
Let the unknown to-morrow
Bring with it what it may.

Though vine nor fig-tree neither
Their wonted fruit should bear,
Though all the fields should wither,
Nor flocks nor herds be there:
Yet God the same abiding,
His praise shall tune my voice,
For while in Him confiding
I cannot but rejoice.

July 29.

My soul is continually in my hand; yet do I not forget
Thy Law. *Ps. 119, 109.*

There is an old proverb which says so truly: Money lost, little lost; for you can easily gain money again. Honor lost, much lost; for it is much harder to regain your good name. But if the soul is lost, all is lost; for you can never, never regain it if it has once perished. "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Now, in our text the psalmist tells us that he is in daily danger of losing his soul, and therefore he is so careful not to forget the Law of his God. Alas, how many are so concerned about their soul's salvation as the psalmist was? So many think that their souls must and will be saved because they have committed no great crime in their life and have tried to do the best they could. Well, Dives and his five brethren were, no doubt, good, honorable people, as the common run of the world is, and yet their souls suffer in hell. All their lifetime they were concerned only about their temporal well-being, but neglected to care for their immortal souls. Hence they neglected to hear the warning voice of their God speaking to them through Moses and the prophets. The greater and costlier the treasure, the more it needs to be watched and guarded. The greatest and most costly treasure we have is our immortal soul. But how many subtle enemies it has in the old Evil Foe, in the laughing, unbelieving, enticing world, in the evil corruptions of our own heart! Verily, that man is a miracle of grace who can save his soul alive out of the wicked Sodom and Gomorrah of this world. As God's grace alone can save us and our precious, immortal souls, let us never neglect His means of grace, His Word and Sacraments, and let us continue in prayer and in a Christian life.

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save
And fit it for the sky.

From youth to hoary age
My calling to fulfil;
Oh, may it all my powers
engage
To do my Master's will!

Arm me with jealous care
As in Thy sight to live,
And, oh, Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give!

Help me to watch and pray
And on Thyself rely,
Steadfast to walk on Christ's dear
way
And God to glorify.

July 30.

As the hart [the deer] panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Ps. 42, 1. 2.

As the hunted, weary deer pants after refreshing water, so David's soul thirsts for the saving presence of his God. In the living God alone can the hunger and thirst of his soul be stilled. Whoever has awakened from his natural sleep of sinful security and has come to realize what it means to be without God and therefore without hope in the world, knows something of this burning thirst after God that consumes the awakened sinner's soul. The old Church Father St. Augustine writes truly: "Our hearts are created for Thee, O God, and they can find no rest until they rest in Thee." But in vain does the soul longing for righteousness and joy and peace seek to satisfy its thirst at the fountains of earthly wisdom, riches, or pleasure. It soon learns that the trivial things of this world can never satisfy the deep longing of its heart. Only God, the living God, has power to revive it, and He does so through the Gospel of His love in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. In Jesus we see the face of our God beaming on us in soul-entrancing love and mercy and find in Him the righteousness and joy and peace for which we crave, sweet communion with God, sure hope of everlasting life. Jesus has won for us forgiveness of all our sins, has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. He says of Himself: "I am come that they [My sheep] might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." He leads us beside the still waters sparkling in His blessed Gospel-promises and so restores our fainting, thirsting soul. All praise be to His great love forevermore! Amen.

O Lord, I love Thee from my heart;
I pray Thee, ne'er from me depart,
With tender mercy cheer me;
I scorn the richest earthly lot,
E'en heaven and earth attract me not,
If only Thou be near me.
Yea, though my heart be like to break,
Thou shalt my Trust that naught can shake,
My Portion, and my Comfort be,
Who by Thy blood hast purchased me.
Lord Jesus Christ!
My God and Lord! my God and Lord!
Forsake me not who trust Thy Word.

July 31.

The fruit of the Spirit is faith. *Gal. 5, 22.*

The word "faith" here means as much as "faithfulness." The apostle is not speaking of justifying faith, which accepts Christ's saving merit, but, as the whole connection shows, he speaks of that virtue by which we keep faith with one another, of fidelity, of faithfulness. Even the unbelieving world admires faithfulness to duty. God's holy Word has much to say in praise of a faithful servant, a faithful friend, a faithful wife, a faithful steward, and so on. But the greatest, most glorious faithfulness which God's Word extols is the fidelity of the Christian to his God and Savior. As God's Holy Spirit alone works saving faith in us, so alone does He keep us faithful to Christ and in the profession of His holy Gospel unto the end. And as we Christians are to be faithful in our love to God, so we are to prove faithful in our daily calling and, above all, in our love to our fellow-men. For faithfulness is *love making good*, standing the test in the storms and vicissitudes of life. There is much faithlessness in this selfish world. Men will break their holiest agreements if they can gain a little money by doing so. And who has not had this or that painful experience with false neighbors or false friends? Is it not too true what the rhyme says: "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone"? May such base unfaithfulness never be found in us. Let us, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, ever show ourselves faithful and true in our tasks, in our love to one another, and above all in our love to Christ and His Word.

O Holy Spirit, enter in
And in our hearts Thy work begin,
Thy temple deign to make us;
Sun of the soul, Thou Light Divine,
Around and in us brightly shine,
To joy and gladness wake us,
That we, To Thee
Truly living, To Thee giving
Prayer unceasing,
Still may be in love increasing.

O mighty Rock, O Source of Life,
Let Thy dear Word, 'mid doubt and strife,
Be so within us burning
That we be faithful unto death,
In Thy pure love and holy faith,
From Thee true wisdom learning!
Thy grace And peace
On us shower; By Thy power
Christ confessing,
Let us win our Savior's blessing.

August 1.

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. *Ps. 37, 5.*

Our Lutheran Church bears the proud distinction of being known as the "Singing Church of Christ." No other Church has produced such a long train of sweet singers glorifying the Lord and His saving grace as has our Lutheran Church. Luther opened the melodious train with his immortal doctrinal hymns. But the unrivaled singer of hymns of comfort in affliction, of "songs in the night," is Paul Gerhardt, who was born near Wittenberg, in 1607, and died at Luebben, in 1676. On account of his staunch defense of God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure he was deposed from his pastorate in Berlin by the Elector of Brandenburg and driven into want and exile. It was then that he composed his deathless song on the above passage of the 37th Psalm, which is known and loved by millions of Christ's suffering saints under the title *Commit Whatever Grieves Thee*. The original German contains 12 stanzas, but we can read only a few of them here.

Commit whatever grieves thee
At heart, and all thy ways,¹
To Him who never leaves thee,
On whom creation stays,
Who freest courses maketh
For clouds and air and wind,
And who care ever taketh
A path for thee to find.

The Lord thou must repose on
If thou wouldst prosper sure,
His work must ever gaze on
If thine is to endure.
By anxious care and grieving,
By self-consuming pain,
God is not moved to giving;
By prayer must thou obtain.

Hope on, thou heart, grief-riven,
Hope and courageous be,
Where anguish thee hath driven
Thou shalt deliverance see.
God from thy pit of sadness
Shall raise thee graciously;
Wait, and the sun of gladness
Thine eyes shall early see.

He may, awhile still staying,
His comforts keep from thee,
And, on His part delaying,
Seem to have utterly
Forgotten and forsaken¹
And put thee out of mind,
Though thou'rt by grief o'ertaken,
No time for thee to find.

But if thou never shrinkest
And true dost still remain,
He'll come when least thou thinkest
And set thee free again,
Thee from the load deliver,
That burdeneth thy heart,
That thou hast carried never
For any evil part.

Hail! child of faith, who gainest
The victory alway,
Who honor's crown obtainest,
That never fades away.
God in thy hand will give thee
One day the glorious palm;
Who ne'er in grief did leave thee,
To Him thou'lt sing thy psalm.

August 2.

There is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy name is great in might. Who would not fear Thee, O King of nations? *Jer. 10, 6. 7.*

Our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only true God, is great, great not only in His divine Being, but great also in His divine name, that is, in every revelation He has given to man He is surpassingly great. There is none like unto Him. "Great in counsel and mighty in work; for Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men to give every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings." *Jer. 32, 19.* How great is our God when we consider His mighty works of creation! How great when we meditate on His wisdom and love revealed in the redemption of man! How great when we contemplate the work of His Holy Spirit in converting and sanctifying the vilest of sinners and restoring him to blessed communion with his God! How great our God is also when we review His righteous judgments on the nations or His wonderful providences with His Church or even in our own lives! Verily, such a great and mighty God we must fear, not as criminals fear the executioner, but as loving and obedient children fear their wise and loving father. For our God is a God of love; all His ways with us are ways of peace and not of evil. But where men refuse to give Him the honor and obedience they owe Him, His holy wrath is kindled against them, and they perish in their disobedience. "I am the Lord; that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another." *Is. 42, 8.* May we spend this new day of our life in the holy fear of our God; for "blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His ways. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." *Ps. 128, 1. 2.*

Guardian of Israel, hear me,
Watch o'er me through the day,
In all I do be near me:
For others, too, I pray;
To Thee I would commend them,
Our church, our school, our land,
Direct them and defend them
When dangers are at hand.

August 3.

So they did eat and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat [pieces of bread] that was left — seven baskets.

Mark 8, 8.

With but seven loaves of bread and a few small fishes our Lord fed a hungry multitude numbering 4,000 people, as this chapter in Mark tells us. These people had followed Him into the wilderness and abode with Him there three days, so eager were they to hear His saving Gospel. In providing thus for their bodily hunger, our gracious Lord exemplifies and confirms most gloriously His saying: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [namely, food and raiment] shall be added unto you." How these attentive and unwearied hearers of Christ's Gospel in the wilderness put so many of our present-day Christians to shame who either neglect Gospel-preaching altogether or very rarely come to church, or when they do, find a sermon of even twenty or thirty minutes too long and leave before the pastor pronounces the benediction! These people evidently do not seek the kingdom of God *first* and have no one to blame but themselves if they cannot make ends meet in their business or family. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread," says David. Ps. 37, 25. The Lord still gives His faithful followers bread enough and to spare, if they will but abide with Him and His Word, not squander His gifts, but "take up the broken pieces," that is, observe *pious* thrift and economy and, above all, not forget to ask His blessing on their daily food. It is a sad fact that praying at table is falling more and more into disuse among us. But saying grace at meat is not a mere custom we may disregard, but a Christian duty. Therefore "give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever."

O grant us peace and gladness,
Give us our daily bread,
Shield us from grief and sadness,
On us Thy blessings shed;
Grant that our whole behavior
In truth and righteousness
May praise Thee, Lord, our Savior,
Whose holy name we bless.

And gently grant Thy blessing
That we may do Thy will,
No more Thy ways transgressing,
Our proper task fulfil;
With Peter's full affiance
Let down our nets again;
If Thou art our Reliance,
Our toil will not be vain.

August 4.

Order my steps in Thy Word and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. *Ps. 119, 133.*

In these hot summer days many of our fellow-Christians, especially from the large cities, leave their business and go on a vacation. But in traveling about the country, viewing its scenic splendors, do they always realize the many dangers to life or limb that threaten them? Do they ask God in earnest prayer for His holy angel guards by night and day, and do they therefore stay in the narrow path of God's saving Word? Or when stopping at the popular pleasure resorts, are they constantly aware of the great spiritual dangers lurking on all sides, inviting them while "in Rome to do as the Romans do" and at least to hide their Christian faith and conversation under the bushel, if not to do worse? It is just in this vacation season that we need to make this prayer of David ours every day and to fortify our faith with a chapter from God's holy Word; for it is alone in His Word that the Lord comes to us and teaches us His ways and sends us His Holy Spirit to fight and conquer all sinful temptations. Many a one has gone forth on his vacation with a free and happy heart and returned with a seared conscience because he forgot to watch and to pray on his pleasure trip. Let us never go from home in the morning, be it on a vacation or to business or work, without first committing ourselves, our body and soul, to the protecting care of our heavenly Father and asking Him to keep our feet in His saving paths that "not any iniquity may have dominion over us."

O God, forsake me not!
 But lead, full of compassion,
 With loving hands Thy child
 That I may gain salvation
 When here my course is run;
 Be Thou my Light, my Lot,
 My Staff, my Rock, my Shield,—
 O God, forsake me not!
 O God, forsake me not!
 Take not Thy Spirit from me
 And suffer not the might
 Of sin to overcome me;
 Increase my feeble faith,
 Which Thou Thyself hast wrought;
 Be Thou my Strength and Power,—
 O God, forsake me not!

August 5.

For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. *Heb. 12, 6.*

"Surely God does not love me, or He would not let me suffer so long or so much!" How often do we hear that complaint from sorely tried Christian friends! How prone we are to make it ourselves when we have to endure long and severe trials! How hard it is for flesh and blood to believe that God is revealing His love toward us when He visits us with great and severe afflictions! And yet it is true, must be true. No Christian heart can and will believe that God inflicts suffering on us for the mere sake of *seeing* us suffer. "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Lam. 3, 33. So there can be but one reason why He takes us into His school of suffering: He has our good, our profit, in mind. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they, verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our *profit*, that we might be partakers of His holiness." Heb. 12, 7—10. Is it not love when the Father in heaven chastens us to make us partakers of His *holiness*? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Therefore let us take to heart what the apostle says in conclusion: "Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees." Vv. 11. 12.

We ask: Can God be Lord of love
And also Lord of sov'reign power,
Yet look in silence from above
While hearts are breaking every hour?

So question we, nor apprehend
Our question answered long ago,
When God His best Beloved did send
To make His own our deepest woe.

Ah! yes, God's heavens most grandly glow
When night reveals each shining star;
*We need our darkest hours to know
How great His tender mercies are.*

August 6.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. *1 John 4, 1.*

There were many false prophets, or false teachers of religion, in the days of the apostles, as there are now. And they were just as dangerous then as they are at present. They all came in “sheep’s clothing,” in the guise of great sanctity and of love for their fellow-men. But whoever believed and followed them was robbed of his saving faith in Christ and perished. Hence the first Christians had to be on their guard against them, as we must be. They could and did “try the spirits.” They had an unerring standard by which they could discover every false teaching and teacher. That was and is the clear and all-sufficient Word of God. The curse of our age is that the great majority of Christians have grown indifferent to the Word of God, no longer making it their only rule and guide in matters of religion. Hence they fall such easy victims to the popular heresies of our age. No more vicious, no more dangerous false doctrine could the arch-enemy of Christ and His blessed Gospel have invented than the one we hear preached from countless pulpits to-day: “It does not matter what a man believes; as long as he is sincere in his belief, God will save him.” But it does matter. It mattered very much when an engineer on a fast express mistook a red signal for a white one and killed and maimed dozens of his passengers. All his sincere belief did not prevent the disaster. As we love our soul’s eternal salvation, let us obey the warning voice of our Savior: “Beware of false prophets,” and, “Try the spirits” — all teachers of religion — according to the divine rule of God’s enlightening and saving Word. Only then are we safe.

O God! how sin’s dread works abound!
Throughout the earth no rest is found,
And wide has falsehood’s spirit spread,
And error boldly rears its head.

Those haughty spirits, Lord, restrain
That fain would o’er Thy Christians reign
And always set forth something new,
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.

August 7.

Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. *Ps. 37, 4.*

The "also" here in our text refers to the command and promise in the preceding verse: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and, verily, thou shalt be fed." "The blessed result of trust and active goodness," says an expositor, "are stable dwelling in the land and nourishment there from a faithful God. The thoughts move within the Old Testament circle, but their substance is eternally true; for they who take God for their portion have a safe abode and feed their souls on His unalterable adherence to His promise and on the abundance flowing thence." Now, we all know from experience how easy it is to trust in the Lord and to delight in Him while He showers on our path peace and prosperity; but when the evil days come and the years draw nigh of which we say we have no pleasure in them, ah! then it is not so easy for us to sing: "Oh, bless the Lord, my soul! His grace to thee proclaim! And all that is within me join To bless His holy name! Oh, bless the Lord, my soul! His mercies bear in mind! Forget not all His benefits! The Lord to thee is kind." Therefore the same expositor truly says: "The heart that delights in God, finding its truest joy in Him and reaching towards Him with the deepest of its desires, will live far above the region of disappointment. For its desire and fruition go together. Longings fixed on Him fulfil themselves. We can have as much of God as we wish. If He is our delight, we shall wish nothing contrary to Him nor apart from Him, and wishes which are directed to Him cannot be in vain."

My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
Oh, may Thy will be mine!
Into Thy hand of love
I would my all resign.
Through sorrow or through joy
Conduct me as Thine own
And help me still to say,
My Lord, Thy will be done!

My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
All shall be well for me;
Each changing future scene
I gladly trust with Thee.
Straight to my home above
I travel calmly on
And sing in life or death,
My Lord, Thy will be done!

August 8.

The fruit of the Spirit is temperance. *Gal. 5, 22.*

The Word of our God often admonishes us to practise temperance; but by “temperance” it does not understand the strict abstaining from all intoxicating liquor. On the contrary, the Bible exhorts us to be temperate in all things, in eating and drinking, in dress and in speech, in a word, not to give way to our carnal passions, but to exercise self-control. So the word is understood in our text here. May God’s Holy Spirit be with us to-day and help us to practise self-control in the trials and temptations we shall meet with in our calling. May we succeed above all in guarding our tongues that they sin not and controlling our tempers under all arising vexations and disappointments. A good Christian farmer who had an uncontrollable temper and often regretted his sinful weakness was told by his pastor quickly to begin saying the Lord’s Prayer to himself before he gave way to his passion. The advice helped. Where God’s Spirit really dwells in the heart, there the earnest desire lives to conform your life in word and deed to the will and command of your God. Though in the weakness of our flesh we may give way in an unguarded moment to temptation, we will not make light of it, but sincerely repent of it, ask our Savior’s forgiveness, and implore His Holy Spirit’s help to amend our ways. “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Then let us daily walk in the Spirit, as the apostle admonishes. Blessed, indeed, shall we be if we heed his counsel and advice. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8, 13. 14.

O God, Thou faithful God,
Thou Fount that ever flowest,
Without whom nothing is,
Who all good gifts bestowest;
A pure and healthy frame
O give me and within
A conscience free from blame,
A soul unhurt by sin.

O let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth;
Grant that no idle word
From out my mouth proceedeth;
And grant, when in my place
I must and ought to speak,
My words due power and grace,
Nor let me wound the weak.

August 9.

Cause me to hear Thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee. *Ps. 143, 8.*

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High; to show forth Thy loving-kindness in the morning and Thy faithfulness at night.” Let us greet each new-born day with glad strains of thanksgiving to our ever kind and merciful God. Under the shadow of His guarding wing have we slept securely during the night. His loving-kindness protected us from all betiding harm and danger. In the light of His loving-kindness would we begin and end this day. His loving-kindness and tender mercy has made us His own in Christ Jesus, our blessed Savior. Trusting in His faithful kindness and mercy, we can every morning joyously go forth to our accustomed tasks, knowing that He is with us to guard and direct our way that no evil befall us. O blessed, O *perfect* day we spend thus in the communion of our kind and loving God! What greater joy could we wish for than to know that He is with us; that we have found forgiveness for all our sins with Him; that all the rich bounties of His grace are opened to us and we shall not want for any good thing? In His precious Word He causes us to know this His great loving-kindness, assuring us of His unfailing grace and mercy. In His Word He makes known unto us the ways in which we should walk before Him. Or should we willingly trespass His holy Law because we know what a kind and loving Father He is to us? “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!” Rom. 6, 1. A Christian heart that has tasted God’s loving-kindness longs for nothing more fervently than to walk in God’s holy ways and to praise *Him* in body and soul who has taken such marvelous saving compassion on him, the dying sinner, and blesses and protects him so mercifully every day.

Lord of my life! O may Thy praise
Employ my noblest powers,
Whose goodness lengthens out my days
And fills the circling hours.

Smile on my minutes as they roll
And guide my future days;
And let Thy goodness fill my soul
With gratitude and praise.

August 10.

If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. *Luke 19, 42.*

On this tenth day of August, in the year seventy after our Savior's birth, the city of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, as Christ had foretold forty years before. The horrors of its siege and final destruction constitute one of the most frightful pages in history. This day therefore reminds us of the pitying tears which our Lord shed on Palm Sunday, about forty years before, at the sight of the doomed city, and of His heartrending cry: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." As a hen gathereth her young under her protecting wings, so had He in tireless love for three long years sought, but sought in vain, to gather His people around Him and His salvation. Even now He was ready to receive and save them if they would only come to Him. But they would not come. He sees and laments the fearful spiritual blindness holding their eyes and made incurable through their wilful and persistent unbelief. He had come as the "Light of the world" to enlighten and save them. But they would not follow Him and so were doomed, doomed by their own fault, to destruction and everlasting night. He is still the Light of the world, our blessed Lord. Whosoever believes in Him does not walk in darkness, but has the light of life, of everlasting life. But, alas! so many of His nominal followers still walk in the natural blindness of their hearts and refuse to believe His Gospel and to be saved. For them He also wept. O may our merciful Savior open *our* eyes that *we* may know in this *our* day the things belonging to *our* peace!

Thou didst behold with pitying eye
Thy great salvation scorned and spurned,
Didst see the prostrate city lie
Ere long by judgment overturned;
Thy tears, O blessed Jesus, flowed,
Thy heart did break in tears of blood.

O man, behold in these sad tears
That flowed from thy dear Savior's eyes
What love to thee His Spirit bears.
Come thou with penitential sighs
That He may now thy soul redeem
Who once bewailed Jerusalem.

August 11.

Neither say they in their heart, "Let us now fear the Lord, our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season; He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

Jer. 5, 24.

Our blessed America has become the granary of the world. Millions of people in foreign lands look to us for their daily supply of bread. We know nothing in our fertile country of dire famines such as often ravage China and India and cause countless thousands to die of hunger. Though the annual crops may fail in one section of our land, they do not fail in other sections; and so we always have bread enough and to spare. In His boundless goodness God has again sent us the former and the latter rain, has blessed our fields, and the golden grain is again being threshed and garnered by millions of bushels. O what happy, grateful, and God-fearing people we ought to be in this favored country of ours! How the goodness of God which again provided our land with such a bountiful harvest ought to lead us to repentance, lead us humbly to acknowledge His undeserved and unfailing kindness toward us and to glorify His great name! But what do we see? Alas! the great majority of our people forget the grateful fear and obedience they owe to the Giver of every good gift. They think it only natural that such rich harvests come about in this country. They ascribe them to our superior farming methods, and so on. And yet, man with all his industry and ingenuity cannot make a single blade of corn grow if God withholds His blessing. Because of this blindness of heart in so many of our people, because of the wicked avarice, "profiteering," extravagance, and luxury to which so many give themselves, God often withholds other good things from us, sends us drought, devastating floods, devouring insects into our fields, and scourges us with labor riots in our cities, with death-dealing epidemics through the land. Oh, that we who claim to be His children might be warned and intercede with Him day and night for our beloved land! May His Holy Spirit help us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving and to use His blessed gifts to the glory of His great name and the welfare of our fellow-men!

August 12.

He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? *Ps. 94, 9.*

God's children must often suffer great wrong from wicked oppressors in this world. "Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked, triumph?" they cry with the psalmist in their helplessness. But it seems as if God does not hear them, as if He were blind to their suffering, deaf to all their anxious cries for help. "Careless seems the great Avenger: History's pages but record One death-grapple in the darkness 'Twixt false systems and the Word; Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne; Yet that scaffold sways the future, And behind the dim unknown Standeth God within the shadow, Keeping watch above His own." Yes, God keeps watch over His own. Our Lord Jesus gives us the assurance: "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Luke 18, 7. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" He sees and knows all the mischievous plans His and His people's enemies concoct in their secret councils and will put them to shame. He hears every unuttered groan of our overburdened heart; He sees every bitter tear we weep in the lonely vigils of our sleepless nights; nothing, nothing, is hid from His all-seeing eye. When His appointed hour comes, He will arise in His might and prove to all the world that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne; that mercy and truth go before His face. *Ps. 89, 14.* Then will His delivered people see that He, their God, never breaks His covenant nor alters the thing that is gone out of His mouth, and they will praise and glorify Him for His great salvation forevermore.

Then cheer thee, cheer thee, suffering saint!
Though worn with chastening, be not faint!
And though thy night of pain seem long,
Cling to thy Lord—in Him be strong;
He knows, He numbers, every tear;
Not one faint sigh escapes His ear.

August 13.

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”

Acts 16, 30. 31.

Paul and Silas were lying in the prison at Philippi, bound hand and foot. They had been beaten with many stripes for proclaiming the saving name of Jesus and were then cast into the dungeon. But they held it pure joy to suffer thus for their Redeemer's sake, and at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, the prison shook in its very foundations, all the doors opened, and every prisoner's bands were loosed. The jailer, thinking the prisoners had fled, wanted to kill himself; but Paul restrained him; and falling trembling at the apostles' feet, the jailer cries out: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” He was shaken in the deepest depths of his soul at the manifestation of divine power which the crucified and risen Jesus had just given in behalf of His imprisoned messengers. He now fears the wrath of this almighty Jesus; for he was also guilty of cruelly mistreating the apostles and knows he has deserved nothing but death, eternal death, at the hands of their God. Guilty fear makes him cry out and ask that question. And what answer do the apostles give him? They do not say one word to him of any kind of penance he must first suffer, of any worthiness or merit he must first achieve. No! Clear, direct, unconditioned, comes their answer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” that is, accept this crucified and risen Jesus as your Savior from sin and guilt and death just as we proclaim Him; trust in Him, and you have nothing to fear; you will not die, but live.” This joyous Gospel-truth wrought saving faith in the trembling jailer's heart. He took the apostles into his house, that selfsame night was baptized, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Vv. 33 and 34. Here we have God's own answer to the greatest question which a fearing, guilt-struck sinner can raise, to the question: “What must I do to be saved?” Let no man, no devil, nor your own guilty heart ever rob you of God's own blessed answer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved!”

By grace! this ground of our salvation,
As long as God is true, endures;
What saints have penned by inspiration,
What God by His own Word assures,
What all our faith must rest upon,
Is grace, free grace, through His dear Son.

August 14.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. *John 12, 24.*

When we view our fields and gardens with their flowers and ripening grain in these summer days, have we eyes to see the great miracle unfolding everywhere before us? Do we take to heart the eloquent message every smiling flower, every nodding ear of grain, proclaims? Our Savior points to that glorious message in our text. It is the divine message of *immortality*. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." That message of blooming fruitful life issuing out of the buried seed has been hallowed and *vitalized* by the death and resurrection of our Lord. He died on the cross for our sins and was buried. But how long did He remain in the grave? "The third day He rose again from the dead," all Christendom confesses with joyous voice. Now He is no more alone, but bringeth forth much fruit. In all the world, wherever the Gospel of His redeeming death and resurrection is preached, there the fields are white to harvest; there precious grain is being gathered, gathered for eternity. Aye, there the angels of God come and carry one ripe sheaf after the other into the golden granary of heaven. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me . . . shall never die," but have life everlasting, our risen Lord promises us. Sad heart, weeping at the graves of your loved ones, bedewing the flowers on them with your ever-falling tears, look up and take the comforting message to heart which even the flowers in the graveyard have for you. They have bloomed into life from buried seed. So the bodies of our loved ones sleeping in the graves are all precious seed, which shall blossom into life and beauty and glory when God's eternal summer comes.

Thou art gone to the grave; but we will not deplore thee
Though sorrow and darkness encompass the tomb;
The Savior hath passed through its portal before thee,
And the lamp of His love is the guide through the gloom.

Thou art gone to the grave; but we will not deplore thee,
Whose God was thy Ransom, thy Guardian, and Guide;
He gave thee, He took thee, and He will restore thee;
And death has no sting, for the Savior has died.

August 15.

And he [the eunuch] went on his way rejoicing. *Acts 8, 39.*

Our Christian faith is a religion of joy. "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy," the angel of the Lord said at the birth of the Savior. Joy, pure, holy, abiding joy, is the precious gift the Savior brings to all hearts that believe in Him. Thus the shepherds, Simeon and Anna, the Wise Men from the East, the jailer at Philippi, were all filled with joy when they found the Savior. So, we are told, the eunuch from Ethiopia went on his way home rejoicing after coming to faith and being baptized in the Lord Jesus Christ. As he, so we ought to go our way through life rejoicing. If we know so little of this heart-filling joy in Christ, it is because we are still too strongly attached to the trivial and fleeting things of this world. But as little as water and oil will mix, so little will true, faith-born joy in Christ mix with the pleasures of this world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." That involves no loss, as so many think, but, instead, brings you great gain. Setting your affection on things above, having your joy in Christ and His redeeming love, fills you with the joy of a good conscience, the supreme happiness of knowing that you are a beloved child of God and cared for and protected by Him in all the vicissitudes of life. When the dark clouds come, this joy "turns them inside out" and shows you the love-beaming face of your faithful Savior, who gives you this assurance: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Luther says: "If we could only truly believe that we are called Christ's dear brethren, then we should be full of bliss already here, our heart would always leap for joy and sing to God an endless *Lord God, we praise Thee.*" May this joy in the Savior be ours to-day and go with us through life!

On our way rejoicing
Gladly let us go;
Conquered hath our Leader,
Vanquished is our foe!
Christ without, our safety;
Christ within, our joy;
Who, if we be faithful,
Can our hope destroy?

Unto God the Father
Joyful songs we sing;
Unto God the Savior
Thankful hearts we bring;
Unto God the Spirit
Bow we and adore,
On our way rejoicing
Now and evermore.

August 16.

For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. *Rom. 7, 18.*

When God's Holy Spirit has by means of the Gospel brought us to believe in Jesus as our personal Savior, we then and there have received the forgiveness of all our sins. But though our sins are forgiven, we are still often tempted by all kinds of sin and evil lust, against which we must continually fight and pray. That often fills us with doubt and fear whether our faith is the true faith and we shall really be saved. But far from filling us with fear, this fight in our hearts against sin should fill us with joy and gratitude to God; for it is the unmistakable evidence that God's Holy Spirit is at work in us, sanctifying and saving us in the way ordained by God's infallible Word. No saint ever reached heaven without having to fight against sin. Even Paul, the greatest among the apostles of Christ, confesses that warfare in our text. He knew nothing of it while he was still a self-righteous Pharisee; but as soon as he was converted to Christ, the fight in him against sin began, and it continued all his life, as we gather from his epistles. So let us take comfort and remember what Luther writes of all truly converted Christians: "All the saints will have to sing this little tune in the Lord's Prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses!' The others, who know no limit to their holiness, understand nothing at all of this; and hence saving grace is not preached for them, because they hold the kingdom of Christ to be of such a nature that in it there is no sin whatever; everything must be so pure and clean as if the very doves had selected it; and they demand a Christian who has no more sin and is holy, yea, like Christ Himself. No; far from it! But *he* is a Christian who is a sinner and aware of his sin, which displeases him sorely, and it grieves him to the heart that he still feels sin. He is no Christian who neither has nor feels any sin whatever; and if you find such a one, he is not a Christian; he is an antichristian and no Christian at all." The more we feel our sin, the more will it drive us to seek our righteousness alone in our blessed Savior.

A clean heart create in me,
Which in Thee, O God, believeth,
And at the iniquity
Of my sins sincerely grieveth;
And when hours of woe betide me,
In the wounds of Jesus hide me.

August 17.

Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. *Luke 16, 9.*

No matter how well-to-do we grow in this world, the time is coming when we shall “fail,” that is, when we shall no longer be able to acquire wealth or enjoy it, but, leaving every penny behind us, must die. But rich and blessed shall we be if in our life we followed the admonition of our Lord here in our text—if we made to ourselves friends with our wealth, which the Lord calls “the mammon of unrighteousness” because it is generally acquired by sinful means and used for unrighteous purposes. How can we make friends with our money, friends that can receive us into everlasting habitations? Not by hoarding it, as the misers do, nor by spending it for selfish pleasure, as do the spendthrifts; neither are we to think that we can gain heaven by our deeds of charity. Though a millionaire gave all he had to the poor, that would not open the bright portals for him if he lacked saving faith in Christ, who alone is the Way and the Door to God’s everlasting mansions. Only such friends can receive us in heaven *as are in heaven*, friends whom we have helped to get to heaven by helping them to come to faith in Christ or by comforting and sustaining them in their faith. A converted heathen lay on his deathbed and said to his missionary: “I am dying now and shall go to Jesus. I’ll fall down at His feet in praise and joy and then stand at heaven’s door and wait for you. When you come, I’ll lead you to Jesus and say, ‘This is the man who called me to Thee.’” Oh, if we all who are blessed by the Lord with worldly goods would use them more to help our poor brethren and in supporting His Gospel-missions at home and abroad, how many such friends would be waiting for us at heaven’s door to welcome us with joy and gratitude! What is all filthy lucre in the world compared with the everlasting habitations where the Lord Jesus Himself will reward those who have served Him with their “mammon” by comforting His bereaved ones or by winning souls for His kingdom here and in heaven whom He has redeemed with His holy blood?

Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to yield Thee,
Gladly, freely, of Thine own;
With the sunshine of Thy goodness
Melt our thankless hearts of stone,
Till our cold and selfish natures,
Warmed by Thee, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed
’Tis to give than to receive.

August 18.

Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. *John 11, 3.*

The two sisters, Mary and Martha, no doubt, nursed their brother Lazarus very tenderly when he fell sick. But the greatest act of kindness they showed him was when they sent for help to Jesus. We know how willingly the Lord complied with their tender appeal. Though He tarried for a while at the place where He was, He finally came to their help and dried their tears by raising Lazarus from the dead. When sickness comes into our homes, we do not delay sending for the doctor; but are we so anxious in appealing to the Lord Jesus for help as were these two sisters? The Lord loves us and our sick ones just as tenderly as He loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus; He loved Himself to death for us. Do we send our prayer: "Lord, behold, he (or she) whom Thou lovest is sick," up to His throne of mercy in the days of sickness, and above all do we send for His servant, the pastor, to come and comfort, warn and instruct and cheer us with God's holy Word? For the Lord Himself is present in His divine Word, present with His saving grace and heart-sustaining comfort and help. In larger congregations it is impossible for the pastor to know when any in his flock fall sick. It is the duty of the members to notify him, as the apostle admonishes: "Is any sick among you? *Let him call* for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him." Jas. 5, 14. But there are also foolish Christians, even doctors, who ought to know better, who will not have the pastor called in to see the sick, even if they know that the patient cannot recover. They say, "It will excite the patient and make him worse." How do they know? If they keep the saving Word of God from the patient, who now perhaps dies in his unforgiven sin, God will require his blood at their hands. But where Jesus comes to those shut in by reason of sickness, even though the patient dies, as did Lazarus, it is nevertheless true what our Savior said of Lazarus: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

Shut in with Christ! O wonderful thought!
 Shut in with the peace His sufferings brought:
 Shut in with the love that wields the rod;
 O company blest! shut in with God!

August 19.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it. *1 Cor. 10, 12, 13.*

Our God is indeed a faithful God. He warns us in this lesson against two great dangers threatening our faith and eternal happiness. The first is the danger of carnal security. God knows how deceitful above all things our poor heart is. In days of spiritual peace, when we are free from heavy crosses and affliction, we are so apt to forget to watch and pray that we *fall* not in the temptation besetting us. Therefore let us heed the warning of our faithful God and never relax in our watchful prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." — The second danger threatening us is despondency. The devil is a past master at the art of deception. When we are enduring long and great trials, he assails us with the thought: "Your affliction is beyond human endurance; you are being tempted above that you are able to bear. What is the use of suffering or fighting any longer?" But let us not listen to the liar and murderer from the beginning, as our Lord Jesus calls him. John 8. Let us seek and find refuge with our faithful God, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to Him. He has numbered the very hairs of our head and cannot and will not let us be tempted above that we are able to bear. He will either lessen the affliction or increase our strength, so that we shall be able to bear it. With every temptation He permits to come upon us He, in His saving mercy, has already provided for our deliverance. Let us trust Him, fight the good fight, and we shall see that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb
And shall I fear to own His
cause
Or blush to speak His name?

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to
grace,
To help me on to God?

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the
prize
And sailed through bloody seas?

Sure, I must fight if I would
reign:
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

August 20.

Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

Is. 41, 10.

How concerned our merciful God must be about our happiness when He calls to us so often and so lovingly in His blessed Word: "Fear not!" It is said these cheering words occur over seventy times in Holy Scripture. They prove, indeed, that God's children will often have reason to fear while sojourning in this evil world. We of the present time have also much cause to fear. Whither we look, we see dark storm-clouds, which bode great ill to our beloved country and to our dear Church. When we look into our private lives, when we see what little advance we make in purity and holiness, what sad experiences so often come to us in our family life, what insurmountable obstacles we meet with in our daily profession, we are often filled with dire apprehension, and our hearts are ready to fail us. Over against such a sea of trouble we feel how helpless, how weak we are. But the more we realize our weakness, the better it is for us; for then God's strength can be made perfect in our weakness. Learning to give up all self-reliance, all trust in our own power and wisdom, and trusting with childlike faith in the supreme power, wisdom, and love of our God and Savior, we acquire that precious thing — a heart established by grace. Though the mountains depart and the hills be removed, we do not fear like those that have no hope; for we know the Lord, our God, is with us and keeps His glorious promise here: "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." Though He may delay His help for a time, still we have no reason to be filled with dread; for He cannot break His divine promise. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but never the sure Word of our God. Then let us take this gracious promise of His into our daily life and quietly wait on the Lord.

The saints should never be dismayed
Nor sink in hopeless fear;
For when they least expect His aid,
The Savior will appear.

Wait for His seasonable aid,
And though it tarry, *wait*;
The promise may be long delayed,
But cannot come *too late*.

August 21.

Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. — If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

John 8, 34. 36.

The old saying is true: "Sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny." What a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Every act we commit is a seed that brings forth its fruit, be it good or evil. They are sorry dupes of the devil who think they can sin and still remain free from injury or punishment. With the first conscious sin they commit they forge the first link in the chain that holds them fast in the bondage of their vile and evil habits. The drunkard who cannot resist the craving for drink, what is he but a helpless victim of his passion that destroys both body and soul? What is the miser who toils day and night for wealth but a sweating slave of mammon? And the ambitious man, the worldly man, the lying and thieving man, what are they but servants of sin? In the first act of sin they committed they all forged the first link of their degrading, vicious fetters. Oh, let us take warning! Let us firmly resist the first conscious sin that no others may follow. In ourselves we have no power to remain free from the enslaving dominion of sin. But praised be God! we have a Savior not only from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." He shed His precious blood to free the helpless captives who were perishing under the thralldom of sin and the devil. His truth, the blessed Gospel of His redeeming love for sinners, regenerates the heart, frees it from the love of sin, fills it with love for Him and for a holy, virtuous life. "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Let us never forget this sacred exhortation of the apostle. Let us daily abide in the saving truth of Jesus, and it will prove a power of God in our daily life to keep us free from the slavery of sin.

O my Savior, help afford
By Thy Spirit and Thy Word!
When my wayward heart would stray,
Keep me in the narrow way;
Grace in time of need supply,
While I live and when I die.

August 22.

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. *2 Tim. 2, 19.*

As it was in the days of the Apostle Paul when he wrote this Second Epistle to Timothy, so is it in our time: False teachers have arisen within the Church who deny the resurrection of the dead, declaring there is but a spiritual resurrection and with their honeyed words destroying the faith of many. Shall we also fall victims to their pernicious teachings? Not if we, in sincere and steadfast faith, build our hope of salvation on the unchangeable truth of God's saving Word. Then we build on a sure-standing foundation, which no false prophet, no calamity, not even the gates of hell can overthrow. This firm foundation has a double seal or inscription. First: The Lord knoweth His own, knoweth them with almighty, everlasting love; He protects them in all dangers and owns them as His dear children in spite of their sinful infirmities, and even death cannot separate them from Him who is the God of the living and not of the dead. "My sheep," says Christ, "hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." But we can retain this sure hope of salvation only when we follow the second seal or inscription on the sure-standing foundation of God: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." It is a fatal error to say that, when Christians fall into sin, they thereby lose only the sense of their forgiveness and of their sonship with God. No! Whoever — no matter who he is — committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. 1 John 3. He loses not only his *sense* of forgiveness, but *forgiveness* itself; and unless he repents, he will perish forever. For by such sinning he falls from the foundation, the only foundation of our salvation, from the truth and mercy of God in Christ. May God's Holy Spirit help us ever to shun all false doctrine and ungodly life, and may He strengthen and preserve us steadfast in His Word and true, saving faith unto our end!

Order my footsteps by Thy

Word

And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear.

Make me to walk in Thy com-
mands —

'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head or heart or hands
Offend against my God.

August 23.

Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. *Luke 5, 8.*

When great prosperity attends his labors, the self-righteous worldling concludes that he must be a favorite of God, and in his blind pride he abuses God's good gifts and so brings himself the more under God's wrath and punishment. But the Bible teaches us not to judge of God's goodness and mercy to men by the material blessings He may send on them in this life. Thus we are told that the rich man in hell received his good things in his lifetime, but pious Lazarus evil things. Luke 16, 25. Great material blessings humble the true Christian. We see this in St. Peter. When he let down his net at the command of Christ and caught such a great multitude of fish, he was so astonished that he fell down at the Savior's feet and stammered: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He deeply felt his unworthiness at this great, unexpected blessing of the Lord. So God's goodness should always lead us to repentance and humble gratitude. When we view the rich harvest-fields around us; when we meditate on all the good things God gives us in this life, we must confess with Luther in the First Article: "God does all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true." Because Peter received God's material blessing in such humble repentant faith, the Lord adds a great spiritual blessing and says to him: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." We can all secure great and abiding spiritual blessings for ourselves if we use our earthly means to catch souls for Christ. By thus supporting the Lord's Gospel-work we prove our gratitude to Him in the most acceptable way.

We plow the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft, refreshing rain.
All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above.
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
For all His love.

August 24.

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" *Rev. 6, 9, 10.*

The morning sun of this St. Bartholomew's Day, in the year 1572, saw the streets of Paris and other cities in France running red with blood. Countless thousands of Protestant Christians had been massacred by order of the French King Charles IX, who wrote to Pope Gregory XIII that he had slain 70,000 "heretics." In his unholy joy the Pope celebrated a solemn festival of thanksgiving and commanded a medal to be struck in commemoration of the butchery known as the *massacre of St. Bartholomew's*. Thus again the "woman, the Great Harlot," prophesied in the Book of Revelation, chapter 17, "was drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," as so often before and afterwards. Our Lutheran forefathers, in our Book of Concord (1580), solemnly protested against this persecution of the French Protestant Christians. In the preface of the Book of Concord they declare: "For in no way do we consent to the shedding of that innocent blood, which undoubtedly will be required with great severity at the hands of the persecutors in the awful judgment of the Lord and before the tribunal of Christ, and they will then certainly render a most strict account and suffer fearful punishment." To the glory of our dear Lutheran Church be it said that she has never persecuted men on account of their religion, as some of the Reformed bodies have done, even here in America, during Colonial times. Countless martyrs of our Church have sealed their faith with their blood at the hands of Romanists. Even the recent World War saw Lutheran pastors cruelly martyred in Finland and Russia. Who knows how we or our children may yet be called upon to testify in behalf of our faith. May we then, as countless faithful witnesses before us have done, hold fast what we have that no man and no suffering take away our crown! If it is sweet to die for your country; it is a thousand times sweeter to die for your *Savior*.

Our foes, O God, are in Thy hand,
Thou knowest their endeavor;
But only give us strength to stand
And let us waver never.

Kindle our hearts to love and faith
That shall be steadfast e'en to
death,
Howe'er the world may murmur.

August 25.

I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. *Ps. 132, 15.*

For years to come our dear country will suffer from the effects of the World War. Taxes will be heavy, and the high cost of living will affect not only the poor, but also the well-to-do. We shall have every reason to practise economy and above all to give heed to the admonition of our God, 1 Tim. 6, 6—8: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." But what shall we do if we lack food and raiment? The answer must be: Go to our heavenly Father, who is so rich and good toward all that call upon Him in humble faith, and who gives us this blessed promise here in our text. Luther writes: "He is truly a rich man who fears God and lives in faith, in such godliness is also content with the things God gives him, and has them with God and honor, not with injustice or injury to anybody. For even in his poverty he has a very great treasure, called *God's blessing*, with which he must be satisfied; for he knows that none of us will carry away more than our food and drink, and all anxious care and labor avail nothing if God does not send prosperity. Therefore a Christian should prize the single dollar God gives him more than all the great possessions of the rich misers on earth. For he has in his home this precious treasure called *godliness*, making him content or satisfied, that is, giving him a peaceful and satisfied, a restful heart in God.

Think not amid the heat of trial
That God hath cast thee off unheard;
That he whose hopes meet no denial
Must surely be of God preferred;
Time passes and much change doth bring
And sets a bound to everything.

All are alike before the Highest;
'Tis easy to our God, we know,
To raise thee up, though low thou liest,
To make the rich man poor and low;
True wonders still by Him are wrought,
Who setteth up and brings to naught.

August 26.

I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. *Ps. 37, 25.*

What David here tells us of God's tender care for His children in this world, especially in time of scarcity and want, Luther confirms when he writes: "No man has ever seen or heard that a Christian has died of hunger. Christians may be persecuted, thrown into prison, numbers of them killed, but if they beforehand have made the best and richest alms their own and *believed the Word*, they all found food and nourishment. For this should disturb no Christian if he cannot be equally as well off or be as prosperous and have as much as the rich. For our Lord Christ gives His people a piece of bread and fish; He does not place before them ten courses, costly and different wines, as the rich do, who live in abundance. For what dost thou want more than that thou canst drive away thy hunger and retain a healthy body? Let that suffice thee." Again Luther writes: "A Christian does not grab after earthly things; he has invested his wealth in heaven, in the bosom of God, and says: Dear Lord, I know Thou hast still more, Thou hast more than Thou canst ever give away; in Thee I shall want for nothing. For if it were needed, the very heavens would have to rain gold; be Thou my treasure-chest, my cellar and garret; in Thee I have all treasures. If I have Thee, I have enough. Those are the true Christians. If we could only *believe*, we should never suffer want. Our Lord God is an excellent goldsmith; out of one gold coin He can make more than a hundred thousand. It is not a question of ready cash; the man with a thousand dollars cannot get as far with his unbelieving heart as the man who trusts in God gets with one dollar."

In Thee, Lord, have I put my trust,
Leave me not helpless in the dust,
Let me not be confounded;
Let in Thy Word my faith, O Lord,
Be always firmly grounded.

Bow down Thy gracious ear to me
And hear my prayers, Lord, speedily,
O grant me Thy protection;
For woes and fear surround me here,
Help me in my affliction.

August 27.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy Keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even forevermore. *Ps. 121.*

We Christians are pilgrims and strangers in this world; for here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come, the city of our God, not made with hands, Jerusalem above, "with milk and honey blest." As the Jewish exile ever turned his longing eyes to the hills of his home country, where stood the Temple of his God, so in the weary pilgrimage of life let us ever lift up our eyes and hearts to the everlasting hills whence alone cometh our help, to the sure promises of our gracious God in His holy Word. Earthquakes may shake and destroy the mighty mountains that lift their lofty heads so majestically to the sky, but no earthquake can overturn the hills on which the Christian pilgrim builds his fond hope of finally reaching his blessed home above. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the promise which our faithful God holds out to us, His redeemed children, also in this psalm. Let us make it one of our joyous pilgrim songs on our way to heaven.

As, when the weary traveler gains
The height of some commanding hill,
His heart revives, if o'er the plains
He sees his home, though distant still,—

Thus, when the Christian pilgrim views
By faith his mansion in the skies,
The sight his fainting heart renews
And wings his speed to reach the prize.

The thought of heaven his spirit cheers;
No more he grieves for troubles past;
Nor any future trial fears,
So he may safe arrive at last.

Jesus, on Thee our hopes we stay
To lead us on to Thine abode;
Assured Thy love will far o'erpay
The hardest labors of the road.

August 28.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1, 8. 9.

This message from John's first epistle humbles every one of us; for it makes every one of us a guilty sinner in the sight of the holy God. Woe to us if we think and say that we have no sin just because we have never been guilty of any gross or vile transgression, like thieves and adulterers and murderers. We would deceive ourselves, as — sad to say — so many people do, and the truth would not be in us. Even if we, by the restraining grace of God, have been kept from gross sin and vice and hitherto have led a blameless, virtuous life, we must all confess that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of the holy God, who looks upon the heart and sees all its evil thoughts and unholy passions. We all have reason, therefore, to smite upon our breast with the penitent publican and say: "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Happy and blessed are we if we do so. For our text assures us, in the second place, that God will graciously hear our plea, forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He is faithful and will keep His divine promise to show mercy to those who contritely confess their sins. He is just. He has already punished all our sins in our dear Savior, who paid for all our debts *in full* with His holy, atoning blood. The just God cannot and will not demand from us a second payment for our sins. Whoever now makes Jesus' blood and merit his own by faith *has* the forgiveness which Jesus won for him, too, even of the many sins of his evil, corrupt heart, and God accounts him righteous and holy for Jesus' sake. May God's Holy Spirit keep us in this humble, contrite faith to-day and to the end of our lives!

Approach, my soul, the mercy-seat,
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou callest burdened souls to Thee, —
And such, O Lord, am I.

O wondrous Love, to bleed and die,
To bear the cross and shame
That guilty sinners such as I
Might plead Thy gracious name!

August 29.

Let, I pray Thee, Thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Thy word unto Thy servant. *Ps. 119, 76.*

In this world of sin and sorrow we need nothing more than this comfort for which David here prays so fervently, saying: "Thy merciful kindness be for my comfort." We need it every day and hour. God's mercy alone can comfort us when our sins oppress and our conscience accuses us. All penances, all prayers to the saints, all vows and sacrifices, avail nothing here. "Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone"; God's mercy alone can save and does save by forgiving sin for Jesus' sake, who is our only Mediator between the holy God and us. And as in the sorrow over sin, so in the manifold trials of life we need the comfort of God's merciful kindness. What "miserable comforters" Job's short-sighted friends proved to be in his great affliction! But, oh! it was heavenly comfort for his agonizing soul when in joyful faith he could exclaim: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" We must all through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. We may be spared great affliction at present; but we do not know what painful trials we shall have to endure before life's journey ends. Oh, if we could not trust in the merciful kindness of our God to protect and sustain us in the severest trials, how *comfortless* we should be! And when we stand weeping at the graves of our departed loved ones, when we think of our own last hour, what comfort has the world to offer us then? None! It can only add thorns to our grief with its vain pleasures and vainer wisdom. God's merciful kindness alone can and does dry our tears at the death of dear friends or at our own death; it dries them with its divine comfort of our victory over death and of life everlasting in heaven with our reunited loved ones because of our Savior's glorious resurrection from the dead. May God's merciful kindness prove our unfailing comfort in sin and sorrow, in life and death, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

My blessed Lord, what bliss to feel Thee near,
Faithful and true;
To trust in Thee, without one doubt or fear,
Thy will to do;
And all the while to know that Thou, our Friend,
Art blessing us and wilt bless to the end.

August 30.

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. *Rom. 8, 1.*

"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," is the confession of every true Christian. Like Paul, he no longer lives for self, nor for this vain world, nor does he seek to establish his own righteousness by keeping the Law; for his heart's delight is that Jesus, his Savior, has fulfilled all the demands of the Law for him and through His precious blood has made him, the unworthy sinner, a pardoned, free, and blessed child of God. Jesus and His adorable love now become the ruling passion of the Christian's heart. Nothing, nothing, is dearer, sweeter, holier to him than the name above all names, the name of Jesus. He lives *in* Jesus and *for* Jesus and has but one regret — that he cannot love his Savior more and serve Him better. But like Paul, the earnest Christian continually finds a different law warring in him with his love for Jesus and divine things. The good that he would do he so often fails to do, whereas the evil that he would not do he so often does through the weakness of his sin-corrupted flesh. With Paul he complains: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" To such complaining Christian hearts the apostle addresses the glorious comfort of our text. Though they are often disturbed by the fear that God is displeased with them and must condemn them on account of their continual sinful weakness, they are to know and believe, and rejoice in, the fact that God sees nothing in them to condemn. All their sinful weakness is covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness; and the good they do, though so feeble and insufficient in itself, pleases and delights the heavenly Father, even as a kind human father is delighted with the first feeble attempts of his little child at walking or learning its lesson. May we all ever abide in the love of our Savior! Then we shall be able to say when assailed by the fear of our sin, in all affliction and even in the hour of death: "There is no condemnation to me; for Jesus is mine."

Jesus, my Lord, my God, my All,
Hear me, blest Savior, when I call;
Hear me and from Thy dwelling-place
Pour down the riches of Thy grace.
Jesus, my Lord, I Thee adore;
Oh, make me love Thee more and more!

August 31.

Two men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. *Luke 18, 10.*

How do we go to church, and when in church, how do we pray? Is it not true that so many among our young people go to church unwillingly, only because they are forced to go by their parents? And when in church, they show no reverent fear in the presence of God, who resides in His holy temple by means of His saving Word and Sacraments. They never think of praying for themselves, for their parents, for their pastor, or for Christ's kingdom while thus at church. And how many older people go to church only from force of habit, thinking they merit heaven by their strict churchgoing and other religious acts! If they pray at all, it is the prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee which they raise, only in a different form. We are to go to church not only to listen to the sermon, but also to pray; and when we pray, we are to do like the publican — pray with a penitent and humble heart, which sincerely longs for God's forgiveness and mercy. Not one of us can say that he has been pure in his heart and clean from all sin. And when he thinks of what trials and temptations the future may bring, does he not sorely need God's loving-kindness and daily pardon for his constant sinful weakness? Let us, then, talk with God in earnest prayer when we are in church, and not talk or whisper with our neighbors. Let us pray, as did the publican with a heart hungering for grace and mercy. Then our prayer will be heard of God, and His blessing will be upon us in all we do.

To Thy temple I repair;
Lord, I love to worship there.
While Thy glorious praise is sung,
Touch my lips, unloose my tongue.

While I hearken to Thy Law,
Fill my soul with humble awe,
Till Thy Gospel bring to me
Life and immortality.

While Thy ministers proclaim
Peace and pardon in Thy name,
Through their voice, by faith, may I
Hear Thee speaking from the sky.

From Thy house when I return,
May my heart within me burn;
And at evening let me say,
"I have walked with God to-day."

September 1.

And they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" *Luke 24, 32.*

One need not travel far to discover that a sinful levity characterizes our time and age. While all men know that they are on the way to death, that eternity is rushing to meet them, that they will never, never "pass this way" again, yet so few of them care to know where their eternity will be spent. It seems to cause them no concern whether they are going to the abode of Christ's blessed saints in heaven or to the fearful pit where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. But let us not be deceived by their outward optimism. In spite of their display of levity and gaiety these people carry about with them a heart either burning with carnal lusts, or a heart that is heavy with some inconsolable grief and weighed down with despair. How happy are we if, by God's saving grace, we have our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with His quickening Word as our traveling companion on our way through life, as the two disciples going to Emmaus on Easter Eve had Him on their way! Then the joyous experience of these disciples will be ours. Though our hearts often grow weak in faith, though doubts and fears assail us, though grief and sorrow oppress us, still shall we then know where we are going; for the risen Lord with His sweet Word divine will assure us of our pardon and peace with God, strengthen our wavering faith, comfort us as one is comforted by his mother, in all the painful experiences of our pilgrim way, and safely lead us through the frowning portals of death into the mansions above, where there is neither night nor sorrow nor sin forevermore. How often our hearts burn now when listening to His blessed words! But oh, how our hearts will burn when we shall see Him face to face! Oh, let us ask Him daily in humble faith also to abide with us and pray:—

O Jesus, Savior, hear our cry! We, too,
Are weary travelers on life's rough path,
And Thou art still unchangeably the same.
Come, Lord, to us and let us walk with Thee;
Come and unfold the words of heavenly life
Till our souls burn within us and the day
Breaks and the Day-star rises in our hearts.
Yes, Lord, abide with us, rending the veil
Which hides Thee from the loving eye of faith,
Dwell with us to the world's end evermore,
Until Thou callest us to dwell with Thee. Amen.

September 2.

Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. *Mark 10, 14.*

God bless the little children! What eloquent preachers they are for us older people with their unquestioning trust in our care and love! Do they not daily remind us of our Lord's saying: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"? How many a man and woman has learned to pray again from their own soul while teaching their darling to lisp its first prayer! And how the unselfish and incessant care of the little ones teaches us elders forbearance and patience and simplicity! What a strong bond of affection they establish between all members of the household! Verily, Luther is right when he says we old folks eat with the little ones and not the little ones with us. For their sake, that we might supply their wants, God protects and blesses us, their guardians. And what a sweet comfort they prove in hours of deepest affliction to many a grieving heart! Truly, children are a gift of God, and parents cannot be too thankful for them. Yet it is awful to think how many of our American parents neglect their most sacred duty to their children by not bringing them to their Savior in Baptism and later to faithful instruction in His holy, saving Word. They are robbing their children of the *divine right* of being brought early to their Savior and will have to give account to their God one day for their negligence. Again, how many parents are so careless about their acts or words in the presence of their little ones, forgetting that they can give great offense to Christ's blood-bought little lambs! "Take heed," our Savior warns, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." *Matt. 18, 10—12.*

Thank God for little children!
When our skies are cold and gray,
They fling a sunshine o'er our hearts
And charm our cares away.
Dear mothers, guard these jewels
As sacred offerings meet,
A wealth of household treasures,
To lay at Jesus' feet.

September 3.

How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?
And how shall they hear without a preacher? *Rom. 10, 14.*

In these days another school-year begins for our synodical colleges and seminaries. From all over the country young men are flocking to these institutions to resume their studies which prepare them for the Lord's Gospel-work either in the parochial school or in the holy ministry. These educational institutions of our Church ought to be very near and dear to our heart; for, as Luther writes, "young people and students are the seed of the Church. When we are dead and gone, whence would come our successors if not from the schools? For the sake of the Church we must have and maintain schools." Sad, indeed, were the days when our Church in this country lacked faithful and efficient pastors and teachers because it lacked these educational institutions. Then countless thousands died for want of the Bread of Life. We nowadays feast at the richly laden table of God's saving Truth and know nothing of such spiritual want and misery. If it is really our heartfelt wish to nourish our souls unto our blessed end with God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure and to hand this priceless heritage down to our posterity, we must follow the shining example of our thoughtful and liberal forefathers, who founded our institutions for teachers and ministers, and, like them, deem no sacrifice too great for their advancement or support. So many among us forget the sacred duty we owe to the kingdom of our Savior and neglect to further the cause of our "schools of the prophets." May we ever be alive to their blessed cause and gladly contribute toward their support! Let us pray:—

Lord Jesus, Thou exalted Head and Bishop of Thy blood-bought Church, we humbly pray Thee to bless the students and teachers in our colleges and seminaries during the present school-year. Do Thou dwell in their midst with Thy Holy Spirit and direct, enlighten, and sanctify both teachers and pupils. Preserve them from all false doctrine, from pride of heart, and from an unrighteous life. Grant them good health and a joyful spirit faithfully to discharge their respective duties as instructors or learners. Take the buildings where they labor under Thy protecting care and fill us all with love and zeal to support and further the cause of these our schools to the glory of Thy great name and the welfare of Thy blessed kingdom among us and all men. Hear us for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

September 4.

And He said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12, 9.

The buffetings of Satan which the Apostle Paul had to endure for a while filled him with great alarm. Again and again he cried to his Lord for deliverance from this terrible affliction, but received the answer which our Lord gives him in the words just read. From this answer we see that the apostle suffered these satanic afflictions not by any fault of his own, but by the will of God, and furthermore, that they could not rob him of God's saving grace, but had to serve to strengthen and ground him in a faith that wholly relies on God's mercy and help. Let us remember this answer of our Lord when Satan would assail us with his fiery darts of doubt and unbelief or even with blasphemous thoughts that fill a Christian soul with horror and dismay. Then let us not think, as the devil wants us to think, that we have lost faith and God's grace, or that God has given us over to perdition and for this reason permits us to be harassed by such vile, satanic thoughts. No, indeed not! From Paul's example we learn that it is just God's true, believing saints who are thus afflicted. God permits the devil to assail them in order to teach them their utter helplessness outside of His protecting and sustaining grace. Thus He frees them from all dangerous spiritual pride and self-confidence, and they learn to cling more firmly to His hand, which alone can save them from the terrible and merciless power of the devil. When the old Evil Foe thus afflicts us, let us courageously put him to shame, as did Father Luther, who relates the following experience: "Once upon a time the devil said to me, 'Martin Luther, you are a great sinner and you will be damned.' 'Stop! Stop!' said I; 'one thing at a time. I am a great sinner, it is true, I confess it. What next?' 'Therefore you will be damned.' 'That is not good reasoning. It is true, I am a great sinner, but it is written, Jesus Christ came to save sinners; therefore *I shall be saved!* Now go your way!' So I cut the devil off with his own sword, and he went away mourning because he could not cast me down by calling me a sinner."

I leave Thee not, Thou Help in Tribulation!
Heap ill on ill,
I trust Thee still,
I hope when all seems near to desolation;

Do what Thou wilt with me,
I yet will cling to Thee;
Thy grace I have besought;
Thou Help in tribulation,
I leave Thee not, I leave Thee not!

September 5.

Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *Matt. 11, 28.*

In the vestibule of the Johns Hopkins Hospital at Baltimore you can see a heroic figure of our Lord Jesus with outstretched and appealing hands. It represents Him in the act of speaking these blessed words of His: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thus our compassionate Lord ought to stand always before us in the burdensome toil and trials of this life. When men attain to wealth and social distinction, their acquaintance is eagerly sought after; but no one cares for the poor, the sick, the lonely, the downtrodden, and forsaken. They bring no advantage, no personal gain, to their friends. But it is just to these our Lord Jesus addresses His sweet invitation: "Come unto Me." Rich and poor, high or low, all are welcome; but the hearts toiling and laboring at tasks they cannot master, groaning under the heavy burden of unforgiven sin or crushing grief and sorrow, they are His dearest brethren and sisters after the flesh to whom He would give rest, that is, whom He would revive and *refresh*. We know how He so kindly refreshes them with the blessed assurances of His pardon, and help, and mercy in His precious, holy Gospel, which is always the *power of God* unto salvation to every one that believeth. Do we always in our troubles follow this kind invitation of our gracious Master which He has addressed also to us so often, or are we like the foolish peddler who continued to hold his heavy pack on his weary shoulders while riding with the kind-hearted farmer who had picked him up on the road and was carrying him *and his burden* to town? If we can trust the Lord Jesus to take care of our immortal souls, we can surely trust Him also with the far lighter burdens of this fleeting life. No matter what these burdens are, — sickness, sorrow, poverty, sin, grief over departed friends and relatives, fear of the future or of death, — all, all we can bring with us to our compassionate Savior; for His invitation is clearly to all laboring and grieving hearts: "Come unto Me." "Whosoever cometh to Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out."

With tearful eyes I look around;
Life seems a dark and stormy sea;
Yet, 'mid the gloom, I hear a sound,
A heavenly whisper, "Come to Me."

September 6.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. *Matt. 11, 29. 30.*

To come to Jesus means to believe in Him as your Savior from sin and woe and death. Such faith unites us with our blessed Lord and puts His yoke upon us. What is that yoke? It means nothing else than to follow in the Lord's footsteps and to do as Paul says, Gal. 2, 20: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." "Jesus speaks to all those who are weary and heavy laden and bids them *change their service*. He tells them to cast off the heavy, crushing weights under which they are staggering through life, to give up the slavery of the world or of the devil for the glorious freedom of the sons of God; to give up serving the lusts of the flesh, or running in the idle pursuits of pleasure, or striving for the bubble reputation, or laboring for the meat that perisheth — and to enter His service. He says: Learn of Me, follow My example; be like Me, *meek and lowly in heart*; do the will of God, not your own. Think of others first, yourselves last; go about doing good; harness yourselves to the burdens of life *with the Gospel-harness, the harness of faith, of love, of patience, of hope*, and you shall find that life is twice as easy to the Christian as to others. Then, in spite of the hard work and the climbing and the carrying of burdens and the bearing of disappointments, you shall have rest, a peaceful conscience, a quiet faith, a peace which the world cannot give." We see, then, that our blessed Lord does not lay a heavier burden on us when He asks us to come to Him and take His yoke upon us, but really wants to be our "Yoke-fellow," who shares our burdens with us and carries the heavier end. Who would not, then, gladly give himself with his burdens to this compassionate and almighty Savior?

Thou knowest, Lord, the weariness and sorrow
Of that sad heart that comes to Thee for rest;
Cares of to-day and burdens of to-morrow,
Blessings implored and sins to be confessed;
We come before Thee at Thy gracious word
And lay them at Thy feet: Thou knowest, Lord.

September 7.

He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. *Mark 7, 37.*

When the people saw the wonderful cure which our Lord effected with His omnipotent word on their deaf-mute friend, they broke out into the joyful cry: "He hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak!" We all have reason to join in this adoring praise of our Savior. By nature we were all spiritually deaf and dumb. Through the sin that is in us we did not know our God and Savior, did not live in blessed communion with Him. We remained deaf to the pleadings of His love that so earnestly desired to save us from sin and everlasting perdition; we were dumb in His praise; no fervent prayer or hymn of gratitude to His wondrous name came over our silent lips. But, oh, the boundless mercy of our Lord, who could not see us die in our sin-lost state! He has come to us also with His quickening, saving Word, saying to our deaf-mute souls: "Be opened!" And now we can hear and understand with a believing heart His incomprehensible love to us dying sinners and praise and glorify Him for His great mercy toward us. Though He took us aside from the multitude, as He did the deaf-mute in the Gospel, and laid us on a painful bed of sickness in order to reveal His saving truth to us; though He may still lead us into dark, mysterious paths, where we must abide alone in our grief and sorrow, still we have reason to confess: "He hath done all things well." In such dark nights of affliction we hearken more diligently to His blessed voice, speak more eagerly and fervently in our prayers to Him, our only God and Redeemer. And though we now can see but through a glass, darkly, we shall in due time see face to face; though we now know only in part, then we shall know even as also we are known; then there will be no end to our astonishment, and through all eternity our grateful song of praise shall ring out: "He hath done all things well."

Beloved, "It is well!"
God's ways are always right;
And perfect love is o'er them all,
Though far above our sight.

Beloved, "It is well!"
Though deep and sore the smart,
The hand that wounds knows how
to bind
And heal the broken heart.

Beloved, "It is well!"
Though sorrow clouds our way,
'Twill only make the joy more dear
That ushers in the day.

Beloved, "It is well!"
The path that Jesus trod,
Though rough and strait and dark
it be,
Leads home to heaven and God.

September 8.

Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. *1 Cor. 13, 13.*

Christian charity is, without doubt, the greatest virtue among men. Like an angel of mercy, Christian charity constantly goes through this suffering, weeping world, everywhere relieving want, drying tears, maintaining sheltering homes for the orphans, the aged, the poor, even for the social outcasts. But men grossly misconstrue the meaning of the apostle when they quote this passage in support of their false contention that we are made acceptable before God and saved by our deeds of charity and not by unquestioning faith in Christ, our Redeemer. It is true, no one can see whether or not I have true, saving faith in my heart: but every one can see from my words and actions whether I love my fellow-men or not. And that is the love of which Paul speaks here. He is not treating of the love we owe to God, but of the considerate, unselfish love we ought to show in all our dealings with our fellow-men. That is clearly apparent from the connection. The Corinthians had been endowed with many wonderful gifts in their congregation. Some had the gift to speak in unknown tongues, others had the gift of healing, and so on. *1 Cor. 12, 8—10.* But although they possessed these wonderful gifts, quarrels and contentions were rife among them. By that they showed how much they lacked true love. Hence in this whole glorious thirteenth chapter Paul admonishes his Corinthian Christians — and us with them — to use the gifts God has given, not for selfish purposes, but for the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the welfare of our fellow-men. Not one word does he say in this chapter of how we sinners are saved before God. He is speaking of the fruit of faith, which is love. Where there is no love, there faith cannot be, for true faith always worketh by love.

Teach us the lesson Thou hast taught,
To feel for those Thy blood hath bought;
That every word and deed and thought
May work a work for Thee.

For all are brethren, far and wide,
Since Thou, O Lord, for all hast died:
Then teach us, whatsoe'er betide,
To love them all in Thee.

And may Thy Holy Spirit move
All those who live to live in love,
Till Thou shalt greet in heaven above
All those who give to Thee.

September 9.

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

1 Pet. 5, 8. 9.

St. Peter knows from his own sad experience what shame and pain a Christian incurs when he gives way to the Tempter. He remembers what his blessed Lord said to him in that tearful night when he fell a victim to Satan's wiles: "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22, 32. In loving solicitude he now warns his brethren, and writes: "Be sober" — surfeit not your hearts with the cares or riches or pleasures of this world. "Be vigilant" — never give way to false security. Know that you will be tempted unawares, cunningly, and that in every temptation the implacable and wily adversary of your souls, the devil, seeks to get you back into his fell power and utterly destroy you, even as a hungry lion seeks to devour his hapless prey. Therefore be always on the alert, watch and pray that ye fall not into temptation. — But Peter also knows that it is not our own soberness and vigilance that saves us from the power of the devil. He himself would have perished in the temptation that befell him if his almighty and gracious Lord had not rescued him out of the merciless claws of the hellish lion. So he points his brethren to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to our Savior, who has battled with the Prince of this world, with Satan, and gained the victory over him *for us*. Therefore he writes: "Resist him, the devil, steadfast in the faith." He does not say: "In *steadfast* faith"; for then we could never be saved, if we had to rely on the strength of our faith. He says: "In *the* faith," namely, the faith that our Lord Jesus has long since conquered the devil and can and will save us from this dread enemy. Looking up to Jesus, trusting in His saving power, resisting every temptation with His Word of divine power, we are sure to gain the victory. And we have a great army with us in this victorious fight against Satan and all his hellish host. We are not assailed alone, not tempted more than other Christians. They endure the same afflictions at the hand of Satan as we do. They are fighting and praying *for us* and *with us*.

September 10.

The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. *Deut. 33, 27.*

“James! James! there you are again: *trying* instead of *trusting*! Suppose you placed your child in the cradle and said, ‘Now, dear one, rest,’ would you expect the little creature to set itself shaking the cradle and to say, ‘I am trying’? Would he rest so?” “No, sir,” answered James, who was always trying to come to rest and peace of soul, but could not succeed and whom his pious pastor was showing where he made his mistake. “No, sir; the child must be still to rest.” “And so must you, James,” his pastor told him. “Tell God, ‘Thou art mine and I am Thine’; cast thyself on His fidelity; sink down upon Him, and, on an Arm firmer than rock, tenderer than a mother’s, thou shalt rest.” Yes, sinking down into the everlasting arms of your merciful God as a weary child sinks down into the arms of its mother, yielding yourself entirely to God without any questioning “ifs” or “buts” — *that* insures sweet rest of soul amid all the trials and sorrows falling to our lot while sojourning in the wilderness of this sin-stained and tear-stained world.

What, though the way be rough and steep?
What, though we stumble as the blind?
There’s joy reserved for those who weep —
The Everlasting Arms are kind.

What matters it if sorrows come?
What, though the night be dark and long?
The darkest night but hides the sun —
The Everlasting Arms are strong.

What, though life’s ocean surges high?
Though adverse winds now toss each wave?
“Be not afraid! ’tis only I” —
The Everlasting Arms can save.

What, though besieged by sin and strife,
The heart and flesh but sink and quail?
“I am the Way, the Truth, the Life” —
The Everlasting Arms ne’er fail.

In life’s fierce conflict faithful be;
’Tis only they who win the crown.
When death disrobes mortality,
The Everlasting Arms reach down.

September 11.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. *Phil. 1, 21.*

"I am no longer disposed," says a Jew in writing to another, "to laugh at religion, or to plead that Christianity has no comforts in death. I witnessed the last moments of my worthy gardener, and wish I may die his death; and if there is happiness in another life, this disciple of Jesus is assuredly happy. When the physician told him he was in extreme danger: 'How,' said he, 'can that be, when God is my Father, Jesus my Redeemer, heaven my country, and death the messenger of peace? The greatest risk I run is to die, but to die is to enter into complete and endless bliss.' His last words were, 'I die, but what need that trouble me? My Jesus is the true God, and eternal Life.'" There are countless such incidents where Jews and unbelievers have been deeply impressed by what they witnessed at the bedside of dying Christians, and by it many of them have been led to accept Christ as their Savior. O it is a blessed thing to make Jesus and His saving Word your one and all, your light, your hope, your joy in this poor fleeting life. Living in daily communion with Him, the Conqueror of death and the grave, you can enter the dark valley free from the hopeless fear and trembling that seizes on the unbeliever in the inevitable hour; for "dying grace will Jesus give you for your dying day," and you will only lose the burdens of this passing world and gain instead the bliss, the glory of that "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" by your blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. What a glorious, blissful exchange!

No, no, it is not dying
Heaven's citizen to be,
A crown immortal wearing,
And rest unbroken sharing,
From care and conflict free.

No, no, it is not dying,
To hear this gracious word,
"Receive a Father's blessing,
Forevermore possessing
The favor of thy Lord."

Oh, no, it is not dying!
Thou Savior of mankind!
There streams of love are flowing,
No hindrance ever knowing;
Here drops alone we find.

September 12.

Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. *James 4, 8.*

Our God is a God at hand and not a God afar off. His faithful Word assures us that "the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them." Ps. 145, 18, 19. We often question in our hearts, when oppressed by great fear and sorrow, whether God has heard our prayers for help and deliverance. Oh, what shameful doubting of the loving heart which our God has for us, His dear children in Christ Jesus, our Savior! The fact is that we cannot make a single step in drawing nigh to our God, but He makes a hundred in drawing nigh to us. Does not our Lord Jesus tell us so in the parable of the Prodigal Son? When the father saw his wayward boy coming home, he had compassion, and ran to meet him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. So our reconciled Father in heaven is minded toward us. Never should we let any doubt or fear keep us from drawing nigh to our God, never let the devil prevent us one moment from returning to our God when we have done anything amiss and our guilty conscience smites us. The longer we stay away from God with our penitence or prayers, the more shall we increase the fear and misery of our heart. "Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart," our God says, Jer. 29, 13. Hypocrites, of course, who draw nigh to God only with their lips while their sin-loving hearts are far from Him, cannot expect the holy and righteous God to hear them. To them the apostle says: "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." But those of a sincere and contrite heart that draw nigh to Him the Lord receives, and dwells in them with all the rich treasures of His grace and comfort and salvation.

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am—Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

September 13.

My times are in Thy hand. Ps. 31, 15.

In these evil-boding days it is especially comforting to lift up our eyes to our heavenly Father and to confess with the Psalmist: "My times are in Thy hand!" For what evil can befall us if our God and Father in heaven has all the days and hours of our life in His almighty and loving hand? He then directs and governs all things for us, blesses our work, sustains us in all trials, and when He sends us afflictions, He does so for our good. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end," He assures us by the mouth of His holy prophet Jeremiah. And because that is so, He also has all the circumstances of our dying hour in His blessed hand. No matter when or where or how death comes to us, we shall be upheld and saved by His almighty hand, from which nothing, nothing can pluck us. O what deep and heart-satisfying comfort this is: "My times are in Thy hand!" May God in His mercy help us that we may never forget this consoling truth and also the sacred obligation it involves! Because our times are God's times, they constitute a sacred trust. We shall have to give an account to God of the manner in which we employ our days. Let us not waste them in mere pleasure-seeking, nor idle them away, nor misuse them for selfish and miserly purposes, but let us faithfully redeem the time by ever doing our Father's will, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and by deeds of helpful love gathering for ourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust cannot corrupt and where no thieves break through and steal. Every new day which He gives us is also in His hand. May we use it for His glory and our own and our neighbor's lasting good!

"My times are in Thy hand."
My God, I wish them there;
My life, my friends, my soul
I leave
Entirely to Thy care.

"My times are in Thy hand,"
Whatever they may be;
Pleasing or painful, dark or
bright,
As best may seem to Thee.

"My times are in Thy hand";
Why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never
cause
His child a needless tear.

"My times are in Thy hand,"
Jesus, the Crucified!
The hand my cruel sins had
pierced
Is now my guard and guide.

September 14.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, "He that showed mercy on him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise." *Luke 10, 36. 37.*

In answer to a certain lawyer's question: "Who is my neighbor?" our Lord tells the story of the Good Samaritan. But note how He changes the question of the self-righteous scribe! The scribe had asked: "Who is *my* neighbor?" The Lord in reply asks: To whom are *you* a neighbor? meaning to say: "If there is true love in your heart, according to God's holy Law, you will not debate long with yourself, when you find a fellow-man in want or danger, whether you are to help him or not, but you will assist him at once; for it is just this needy fellow-being whom God now shows you as your neighbor." So the Good Samaritan acted. He did not, like the priest and the Levite, in cold indifference pass by the wounded man lying helpless by the wayside, but helped him at once in self-sacrificing, tireless, sympathetic love. If this scribe ever followed the pattern of true love for one's neighbor which the Lord held up to him in the example of the Good Samaritan, he no doubt soon learned that he did not have this self-sacrificing love and therefore could not inherit eternal life by his keeping of the Law. For if he did not even know who his neighbor was, how could he love his neighbor as himself? And if he did not love his fellow-men whom he could see, how could he love God, whom he could not see? Through this example of the Good Samaritan this scribe and we all are to learn, first of all, our utter inability to save ourselves by our own imperfect deeds of love, and are to be led to believe in Him who came down from heaven to save in His self-sacrificing, merciful love our human race, wounded unto death by sin and the devil. Only when His mercy has filled our hearts, will we learn to be Good Samaritans to our needy fellow-men and to show mercy even to our enemies.

Lord, as to Thy dear cross we flee,	Help us, through good report and ill,
And plead to be forgiven,	Our daily cross to bear;
So let Thy life our pattern be,	Like Thee, to do our Father's will,
And form our souls for heaven.	Our brethren's grief to share.

Let grace our selfishness expel,
 Our earthliness refine;
 And kindness in our bosoms dwell,
 As free and true as Thine.

September 15.

And Jesus said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven." And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" And He said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." *Luke 7, 48—50.*

We know the joyful answer to the upbraiding question of these Pharisees that ask: "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" It is Jesus, the sinners' Friend and Savior, God's Son made manifest in the flesh just for this merciful purpose of saving sinners. He has paid in full for all their sins with His holy, precious blood, and now has the blessed, the adorable right to grant forgiveness as a free gift of His compassionate love to all who come to Him with a penitent heart for forgiveness and salvation, as did this woman. And where He forgives sins, there peace, sweet peace, fills the fearing, troubled conscience; there you know and feel yourself under your almighty Savior's protection, and all the tribulations of the world cannot rob you of that deep serenity of soul. How do we attain to this precious peace? How can we keep it ours in spite of all the changeful feeling of our hearts in this troublesome life? Jesus tells us when He says to the woman: "Thy *faith* hath saved thee!" No sick person is ever cured by merely telling the physician of his pain or ailment. The most necessary thing for the patient is to use the remedy the wise physician prescribes. If this woman had only sorrowed over her sins and had never come to Jesus and believed in Him as her personal Savior, she would never have found forgiveness and peace. Painful sorrow over sin will save no man, will give him no peace of heart, if he does not turn to Jesus and accept by faith the forgiveness and peace his Savior offers him in the Gospel. The faith that keeps its eyes fixed on Jesus and His word of pardon: "Thy sins are forgiven thee!" has and retains that blessed peace of God which passeth all understanding and which keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus unto everlasting life.

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, nor heart can
frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Thy blest
name,
O Savior of mankind!

O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind
Thou art,
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find?
Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.

September 16.

Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He. *Deut. 32, 3. 4.*

Are we always ready to ascribe greatness to our God and to glorify His wise and holy ways, as Moses does in our text? It is true, God's mysterious providences often seem painful to us. With our puny reason we often cannot grasp their true significance. But that only proves how much higher God's thoughts are than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways. But when we look into the great book of nature, where His perfect wisdom shines forth in every creature He has made; when we look into the Book of books, the Bible, where He has so gloriously revealed His saving mercy, — have we not all reason to trust His matchless and gracious wisdom and joyfully to believe that "behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face"? Ah, we are all quite ready to do so in days of smiling prosperity and to sing with a grateful heart: "God is Love, His mercy brightens All the path in which we rove; Bliss He wakes, and woe He lightens; God is Wisdom, God is Love!" Or when great sorrow comes to a Christian neighbor and he stands weeping at the grave of his dear ones, we are ready to cheer him with the pious hymn: "Whatever God ordains is good! Holy His will abideth; I will be still whate'er He doth, And follow where He guideth. He is my God; Though dark my road, He knoweth how to shield me, Wherefore to Him I yield me." But when God touches *us* in our own flesh, as He did poor suffering Job, how then? Do we hold still then with uncomplaining, submissive faith? It may be natural to complain against God then, as many do, but it is nevertheless a grievous sin; for it is questioning God's wisdom, holiness, and love. Our God never makes mistakes; He never deals unjustly or unkindly with us. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how should He with Him not freely give us all things?" Standing under the cross of Jesus, we can glorify our God and His unsearchable ways even in our tears.

Whatever God ordains is good!
His loving thought attends me;
No poisoned draught the cup can be
That my Physician sends me,
But medicine due; For God is true.
Of doubt, then, I'll divest me,
And on His goodness rest me.

Whatever God ordains is good!
My Life, my Light can never
Intend me harm; then, to His care
I give myself forever
In weal or woe; For well I know,
I once shall see quite clearly
That God did love me dearly.

September 17.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Phil. 3, 13, 14.

The Apostle Paul has grown old and gray in the service of his Master. For his dear Savior's sake he has brought the greatest sacrifices, forsaking home and friends and worldly advancement, suffering stripes and persecution instead. He is now even in bonds for the Gospel's sake and writes this letter to the Philippians from his prison in Rome. Verily, if there ever was a Christian who could think: "I can take things easy now in my Christ calling; I can rest on my laurels, for I have labored and suffered more for my Lord than any other of His followers," — that man was Paul. But what do we hear him say? That the time for resting has not yet come for him. He is still like a runner who never pauses in his race, never looks back with self-satisfaction at the great distance he has covered, never stops to pick some beautiful flower growing near the wayside, but unfalteringly keeps his eyes fixed on the goal before him and strives with might and main to gain the precious prize. What an inspiring example the dear apostle here has left to all of us! Alas, under the cares and pleasures of life we are so prone to forget the prize — the crown of immortal life. There are times when we think we can take it easy in our Christian calling, that we need not battle so earnestly against sin and the world and our flesh, nor watch and pray so much, because we are such good and virtuous Christians. But to pause and to rest in our Christian race means to go backward, it may mean to fall away from Christ altogether. God help us to follow the example of the apostle and never to rest in our race until by His grace we reach the mark, and attain the crown of life in our ever-lasting home.

Awake, my soul, stretch every
nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown.

'Tis God's all-animating voice
That calls thee from on high;
'Tis His own hand presents the prize
To Thine uplifted eye.

A cloud of witnesses around
Hold thee in full survey;
Forget the steps already trod,
And onward urge thy way.

Then wake, my soul, stretch every
nerve,
And press with vigor on;
A heavenly race demands thy zeal,
And an immortal crown.

September 18.

I, even I, am the Lord; and beside Me there is no savior.

Is. 43, 11.

Our hearts must fill with holy awe and reverence when hearing these majestic words of our God. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world had been formed by His mighty word, He *was*. And He always remains the Lord, the supreme Ruler of all things in heaven and in earth. It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves, and we are dependent on Him for every breath we draw. Without Him we could not live a single moment. As His creatures we owe Him all reverence and obedience. He can both create and destroy. We have to do with Him, and not with some blind force in nature, for everything that pertains to our temporal and eternal happiness. He alone is our Savior. In Christ Jesus, His only-begotten Son made manifest in the flesh, He has obtained for us redemption from sin and death and from the wrath to come. In Him alone can we find forgiveness for our sins, life, and salvation. Then let us give our hearts to Him, and honor and obey Him in His holy Word. Let us cling in abiding faith to our Lord Jesus Christ and not listen to the great mass of unbelievers who in their wicked folly deny that our Savior is true God, deny that He died in our place for our redemption, and would rather believe in "Evolution" than in the personal and living God who made heaven and earth. Let us take the warning words of Jesus to heart: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. 10, 28. He will one day in His wrath destroy all His enemies who refused to own Him as their Lord and Savior; but to those who loved, honored, and obeyed Him in Christ Jesus, His Son, will He give life eternal.

The man is ever blest
Who shuns the sinners' ways;
Among their counsels never
stands,
Nor takes the scornors' place;

But makes the Law of God
His study and delight,
Amid the labors of the day
And watches of the night.

He like a tree shall thrive,
With waters near the root;
Fresh as the leaf his name shall live;
His works are heavenly fruit.

Christ knows and He approves
The way the righteous go:
But sinners and their work shall
meet
A dreadful overthrow.

September 19.

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. *Ps. 130.*

This golden penitential Psalm has ever proved a refreshing spring to sin-burdened hearts thirsting after grace and pardon. In its living water they drink new hope, new courage, for the psalm overflows with sweet, divine assurance of forgiveness and “plenteous redemption” from all sin. The human heart can know no greater misery than to labor hopelessly under the condemning sense of unforgiven guilt. On the other hand, our hearts can know and taste no greater bliss than to have the sure conviction: I have found forgiveness for all my sins; not one of them shall ever condemn me; God is my loving, reconciled Father in Jesus, my Savior; in Him I, unworthy though I be, have peace with God; nothing shall ever separate me from His divine love; heaven stands wide open to receive me; my name is written in the book of life. O let us thank our merciful God for giving us Luther and through him the open Bible, where the healing streams abound and sin-sick hearts can find pardon and peace and comfort without money and without price! Let us glorify our ever-gracious and compassionate God for all His loving-kindness towards us and fear Him, as the Psalmist declares: “But there is forgiveness with Thee *that Thou mayest be feared.*”

O God, Thou righteous, faithful
Lord,
I have not kept Thy holy Word,
But sinned, and oft offended Thee;
Now I repent—it grieveth me!

I pray through Christ, Thine only
Son,
Who for my good here flesh put on:
Thy love to me let never fail;
O'er justice let Thy grace prevail.

In mercy, Father, let Thy grace
Through Jesus' blood my sins
efface;
Then I, the poor lost child, will be
From all my sins forever free.

Grant that, according to Thy
Word,

I lead a godly life, O Lord,
And let me, after time is o'er,
Inherit life forevermore.

(For Luther's hymn on this Psalm see devotion for October 30.)

September 20.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. *Heb. 13, 9.*

The great dividing line between the Christian religion and all other religions is the doctrine of salvation by grace. All other religions ascribe to sinful man some merit in gaining favor with God and being saved; the Christian religion alone gives all glory to God by teaching that we sinful mortals are saved by the free, unmerited grace of God, which was won for us by God's incarnate Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and which is offered and given to us for His sake as a free gift of God's love in the Gospel. When this doctrine of free grace lives in your heart, it preserves you from falling a victim to the many "divers and strange doctrines" that mislead countless souls nowadays. For this doctrine is like the wonderful flower known as *touch-me-not*, that closes its petals when any one touches it. So this doctrine of salvation by free and unmerited grace at once closes the heart against any and all false teaching that would in any way detract from Christ's saving merit or from our being saved by His grace alone. Thus this doctrine establishes the heart, building it securely on the *Rock of Ages*. It is also an unerring light for explaining the Scriptures and detecting the most subtle false doctrine. Let us thank God for restoring this blessed doctrine to us through the services of Luther, and let us say with the dear Reformer: "In my heart there reigns alone, and ever shall reign, this one article, namely, faith in my dear Lord Christ, which is the beginning, middle, and end of all my religious thoughts that I have day or night."

By grace! this ground of our salvation,
As long as God is true, endures:
What saints have penned by inspiration,
What God by His own Word assures,
What all our faith must rest upon,
Is grace, free grace, through His dear Son.

By grace the timid hearts that languish
Find access to the Father's heart,
When conflicts fierce and bitter anguish
Bid all their joy and hopes depart.
Where, oftentimes, should I strength obtain,
Did grace my anchor not remain!

By grace! on this in death I'll rest me,
Rejoicing, e'en though feeling naught;
I know my sin — it oft oppressed me —
But Him, too, who salvation brought.
My heart exults — grief flees apace —
Because my soul is saved by grace.

September 21.

Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? *Luke 17, 17.*

Our Savior had listened to the agonizing cry of the ten lepers: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," and had cleansed them from their awful malady. But only one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned to the Savior and thanked Him. The other nine in base ingratitude forgot the Lord who had shown them such great mercy, forgot that they owed Him gratitude. "Where are the nine?" Still to-day our Savior must raise that mournful question. "Where are the nine?" You will find them among so many of our confirmed children, who, after scarcely renewing their baptismal vow and pledging fidelity to their Savior even unto death, shamefully forget their Lord, His saving Word, His blessed fellowship, and instead fellowship the wicked world and often bring down the gray hairs of their pious parents with sorrow to the grave. "Where are the nine?" You will find them among the adult members of our churches, who give themselves to the service of Mammon, live in open enmity with their neighbors, and are dead, unfruitful trees in other respects. "Where are the nine?" You will find them among so many former sick and invalid persons, who in their days of suffering called so piteously on the Lord for help and solemnly promised to amend their sinful lives. But when the Lord had heard them and restored them to health or saved them from other dangers, then, like the nine ungrateful lepers, they forgot their kind Savior, forgot their sacred vows, and forthwith went back to their old evil ways and habits. Oh, how fickle, how depraved is human nature! Jesus in His great mercy has cleansed us all from the deadly leprosy of sin and daily saves and protects us from great harm and danger. May we always gratefully own Him as our Lord and Master and pay our vows of faithful love to Him! "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." Ps. 50, 23.

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Unite my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there.
Thine wholly, Thine alone I am;
Be Thou alone my constant flame.

Oh, grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone!
Oh, may Thy love possess me whole,
My Joy, my Treasure, and my Crown!
Strange flames far from my heart remove;
My every act, word, thought be love!

September 22.

For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. *Jer. 2, 13.*

There is nothing more pathetic than to hear of a thirsty desert-wanderer coming to a well or cistern in the fond hope of quenching his raging thirst, and, lo, there is no water; for the cistern is broken. But that is the sad, though justly merited, fate of all men who refuse to honor and worship the true God as He stands revealed in Holy Scripture. In their unbelief these men are guilty of the two evils with which God charges idolatrous Israel in our text. In base ingratitude they forsake the fountain of living waters, the true God, to whose blessing they owe their very life and all their possessions. Then, on the other hand, they give the honor and worship due their kind and benevolent Maker and Savior to idols and serve them with rites and superstitions that are an abomination in the sight of the holy God. Though our modern unbelievers and infidels do not practise the *gross* form of idolatry of which faithless Israel was guilty, they all worship some false god, be his name nature, or science, or art, or whatever it may be; for unbelief and idolatry, though of a finer sort, always go hand in hand. But these false gods of the unbelievers prove broken cisterns which are unable to quench the thirst of their worshippers, whose immortal souls can find the peace and happiness for which they long so ardently alone at the fountain of living waters — that God who calls to them in Christ Jesus: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” John 4, 14. Oh, these poor, blind, thirsting infidels! How we Christians ought to pity them and pray for them! Let us pray for them now in the prayer of our Church:—

Almighty, merciful, and gracious God and Father, with our whole heart we beseech Thee for all who have forsaken the Christian faith, all who have wandered from any portion thereof, or are in doubt or temptation through the corruptors of Thy Word, that Thou wouldest visit them as a Father, reveal unto them their error, and bring them back from their wanderings, that they in singleness of heart, taking pleasure alone in the pure truth of Thy Word, may be made wise thereby unto everlasting life; through faith in Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

September 23.

Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. *Matt. 20, 26—28.*

Sinful pride is deeply rooted in the heart of man, and, alas, also in the heart of Christ's followers. Our Lord often had to rebuke His disciples for quarreling among themselves which of them was greater than the others. The sinful pride, claiming superior rank and authority in the Church, has ever been the fruitful cause of heresy and dissension. It gave rise to popery and is still the unholy mother of all the quarreling sects that tear and rend Christendom. And, oh, what strife, what misery this pride so often produces among members of the same congregation! Let us all take the lesson in humility to heart which our Lord so lovingly gives us in our text. Pride always goeth before a fall. Pride caused Adam and Eve to fall away from God. Where pride rules the heart, the lowly Savior cannot and will not dwell with His saving grace. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Only he who has made Jesus his own in humble faith has the will and the power to curb the natural pride of his sinful heart and to serve his fellow-men in self-sacrificing love. The more he learns to love Jesus who died for him, the poor, unworthy sinner, the nearer and dearer this blessed Savior grows to his heart, the more *unselfish* does he become, the more does he strive to follow the example of his Lord, who came not to be served, but to serve, and even to give His life in order to save His poor, lost brethren after the flesh. Such an unselfish, self-sacrificing Christian is accounted great in the kingdom of God. Though the world know nothing of him, his name shines in the honor roll of heaven, exceeding in glory the fame of all the proud and mighty potentates of earth.

Lord, let Thy woes, Thy patience,
My heart with strength inspire
To vanquish all temptations,
And spurn all base desire;
This thought I fain would cherish
most —

What pain my soul's redemption
Hath Thee, O Savior, cost!

And let me do to others
As Thou hast done to me:
Love all men as my brothers,
And serve them willingly,
With ready heart, nor seek my
own,

But as Thou, Lord, hast helped us,
From purest love alone.

September 24.

And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." *Luke 19, 5.*

This Zacchaeus was a rich man and the chief of the Roman tax-officials in Jericho. But all his wealth and social distinction could not ease his conscience from the load of sin and guilt under which he was groaning. Being small of stature, he climbs a sycamore-tree when he hears that Jesus is about to pass through Jericho. He longs to see the kind Savior of the publicans and sinners. No doubt, the secret wish lived in his heart: "Oh, that this Jesus would help and save me, too!" And now behold what a compassionate Savior all contrite sinners have in Jesus, whether they be rich or poor! Our omniscient Lord, who knows what is in man and reads our secret thoughts from afar, knew and saw this longing of Zacchaeus' heart for pardon and peace with God, and so He passes through Jericho to bring salvation to poor, penitent Zacchaeus. O what a kind and faithful Friend and Savior we sinners have in Christ! It is gloriously true what He says there in the house of Zacchaeus: "The Son of Man is come to *seek* and to save that which was lost." Not one of His blood-bought sheep will He, the Good Shepherd, overlook and abandon to its fate. He goes out to *seek* them all; and when He has found them, as He found Zacchaeus, He abides with them in their hearts and their homes, and fills them with the rich joy of His saving presence. He has been seeking us from our youth in His holy Gospel. Have we received Him joyfully, as did Zacchaeus? Blessed are we if we have. For then is salvation come to us and to our homes.

Jesus, Savior, come to me!
Let me ever be with Thee;
Come, and nevermore depart,
Thou who reignest in my heart.

Lord, for Thee I ever sigh,
Nothing else can satisfy,
'Tis my constant cry to Thee:
Jesus, Jesus, come to me!

Earthly joys can give no peace.
Cannot bid my longing cease;
But to have my Jesus near,
This is all my pleasure here.

September 25.

And the Lord said unto Cain, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" And he said, "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" *Gen. 4, 9.*

Does this searching question of God to Cain: "Where is thy brother?" also concern us? How can we doubt it? For we know how God in His holy and unchanging Law demands that we love our neighbor as ourselves and should therefore in no wise hate or harm him, but help and befriend him in all his needs of body and soul. Let no one think that he can escape this searching question of our just and holy God. He will bring all men's deeds and acts toward their brothers to light one day and will ask: "Where is thy wife? Where is thy husband? Where are thy children? Where is thy old father and mother? Where are thy servants, thy laborers, thy employers? Where are thy scholars? Where are thy congregation-members? Where are the heathen for whom thou oughtest to have prayed and to whom thou shouldst have brought My saving Word? Where is thy next-door neighbor?" Verily, none of us will have the courage to reply with Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" For that is the question of a murderer, and who would be willing to bring it over his lips? Many will try to excuse their selfish indifference toward their relatives and fellow-men by saying: "I had no time to bother about my brother and neighbor. I had to look out for myself!" But that excuse will not stand before God, whose unchangeable Law makes it our sacred duty to know where our brother is and to be concerned about his welfare. We all need to repent here and to seek forgiveness for our sins in the atoning blood of our Savior; for we all have so often neglected the love we owe our neighbor. But may His Holy Spirit daily arouse in us prayerful and helpful solicitude for each other and for all dear souls united with us in the bonds of blood or faith. Then, when on His great day He asks us: "Where are the others?" we can joyfully say: "Here, Lord! By Thy great mercy we have lost none."

May we Thy precepts, Lord, fulfil
And do on earth our Father's will,
As angels do above;
Still walk in Christ, the living
Way,
With all Thy children, and obey
The law of Christian love.

So may we join Thy name to bless,
Thy grace adore, Thy power
confess,
From sin and strife to flee;
One is our calling, one our name,
The end of all our hopes the same,
A crown of life with Thee.

September 26.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
Col. 3, 2.

Where our treasure is, there our heart will be. If Jesus and His precious salvation is our heart's greatest treasure, as we so often sing, then our heart will dwell with Him in heaven though in body we still tabernacle on this poor earth. Yet we all need to take this earnest admonition of the apostle to heart and daily set our affection on things above, where Christ is, our love. For we are evidently living in the days of which our Savior speaks, Luke 17: "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Most of our present-day Christians, like the people of Sodom, have set their affection on things of this earth. All these worldly-minded Christians care for little else but the passing pleasures and treasures of this world. They love the world, and live for the world, and will perish with the world, if they do not *repent*. The wide-spread falling away from the faith and the materialistic spirit of our times are an unmistakable sign that the Day of the Lord is at hand. The more need, then, for us to set our affection on things above, and though living in this sinful world, not to be one of its carnal-minded children, but strangers and pilgrims hastening toward our heavenly home. With that mind in us, while we use the things of this world as we need them for the support of this body and life, we will not abuse them in sinful pride or lust or greed, but will "mortify our members which are upon the earth," as the apostle farther on admonishes, and will strive for the imperishable crown of everlasting life with Christ, our One and All.

One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er;
Nearer my home, to-day, am I
Than e'er I've been before.

Nearer my Father's house,
Where many mansions be;
Nearer to-day the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea.

Nearer the bound of life
Where burdens are laid down;
Nearer to leave the heavy cross,
Nearer to gain the crown.

September 27.

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. *Ps. 139, 7—10.*

The prophet Jonah tried to flee from the presence of the Lord; but we know how useless was his attempt. Even while Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish in the nethermost depths of the sea, the right hand of the Lord upheld him. Jonah repented of his great folly, and cried to God for deliverance. And the Lord heard him and brought him back to the world, back to life again. And in this respect Jonah is a prophetic type or sign of our Lord Jesus and His resurrection from the dead, as the Lord Himself tells us. *Matt. 12, 40.* Ever since our dear Savior by His death and resurrection has reconciled us to our God and Judge in heaven, we need not try to hide from Him, the omnipresent and all-seeing God, as Adam and Eve vainly tried to do and Jonah attempted; but wherever we are, in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, we can call on Him for pardon, and help, and comfort, knowing that He will hear us for Jesus' sake. He fills heaven and earth with His mighty and, for us Christians, gracious presence. What a world of comfort that truth has for the Christian especially when his calling leads him into dangerous heights while laboring on tall buildings or even flying in the skies in the service of his country or while toiling in the bowels of the earth at mining, and so forth! We often think so sadly of our loved ones lying alone in their dark graves, when we ought to take sweet comfort from the blessed fact that our God — the God of the living and not of the dead — is with them, and holds them in His almighty right hand and will one day bring them forth from the grave, as He did Jonah, as He did our Savior. Let us ever walk uprightly in the presence of the all-seeing God, and we shall have no need to fear any danger, any duty, any death.

Though faint, yet pursuing, we go on our way;
The Lord is our Leader, His Word is our stay;
Though suffering, and sorrow, and trial be near,
The Lord is our Refuge, and whom can we fear?
He raiseth the fallen, He cheereth the faint;
The weak and oppressed, He will hear their complaint;
The way may be weary, and thorny the road,
But how can we falter? Our help is in God!

September 28.

Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. *Matt. 6, 32.*

It is a true saying that worry kills more people than all other ills our poor human flesh is heir to. We Christians, at least, have no need to worry at any time or for anything. Our duty is to prove faithful to our Savior, faithful to our calling, faithful in our prayer, and to leave everything else in childlike, happy trust to our heavenly Father. He knows what things we stand in need of for the support of this body and life and will provide them. He will take care of us to-day; He will take care of us to-morrow; He will take care of us unto the end of our life, at all times, in all places, in all sickness, all sorrow, even in death. He is our *heavenly* Father, hence not limited in His means or ability to help, as earthly fathers often are. His loving care of His believing children never ceases. Our earthly parents may die, our heavenly Father never. To doubt His willingness or ability to provide for us and help us, and to begin to worry because *we* know of no help out of our difficulties, is to doubt our heavenly Father's loving faithfulness and truthful Word. Let us not be guilty of such ingratitude toward that adorable God who has fed, and clothed, and protected us so kindly from our youth. He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how should He not with Him freely give us all things? In the face of our dying Savior on the cross, what a shame it is for us ever to doubt our heavenly Father's love and care for us! His providences with us may often be wonderful, but they will all find a happy issue. Then let us leave all things to God's wise and fatherly direction. He may try us, but suffer us to perish — never!

I leave all things to God's direction,
He loveth me in weal and woe;
His will is good, true His affection,
With tender love His heart doth glow.
My Fortress and my Rock is He:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

My God hath all things in His keeping,
He is the ever faithful Friend,
He grants me laughter after weeping,
And all His ways in blessings end.
His love endures eternally:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

September 29.

There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. *Ps. 91, 10—12.*

Of old this day was observed as the feast of the holy angels, and was called *St. Michael's Day* in honor of Michael, one of the chief princes among the angels. Dan. 10, 13. From Holy Scripture we learn that the angels of God are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. And we read of many a helpful service they showed to God's pious children both in the Old and in the New Testament. Every little Christian child has its guardian angel. Matt. 18, 10. Every adult Christian can joyfully lay claim to what the Psalmist says, *Ps. 34, 7*: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." The words of our text also assure us of the ever-present and watchful care of God's holy angels. How thankful we ought to be to our heavenly Father for sending us these loving and mighty watchmen and protectors in this evil world! Our path through life is beset by countless evils and dangers. How many huge stones of sin, and temptation, and of great affliction lie about on our way to heaven, barriers we could never pass by ourselves and among which we would perish if God's ministering spirits did not safely carry us over them! What a comforting promise, then, our text holds out to us amid the unknown trials and dangers of every new day! But let us ever remember that the promise holds good only so long as we stay in the ways in which God has placed us, if we walk in the paths of righteousness laid down for us in His holy Word. Who goes his own self-chosen ways does so at his own risk and forfeits the guardian care of God's holy angels. May our dear Lord Jesus, to whose great love and merit alone we owe the blessed companionship of the angels, make this day a *Mahanaim* (two hosts) for us where the angels of God meet us with their protecting care, as they did Jacob on his homeward journey. *Gen. 32, 1. 2.*

Jesus, Brightness of the Father,
Life and Strength of all who live!
In the presence of the angels
Glory to Thy name we give:
And Thy wondrous praise rehearse,
Singing in harmonious verse.

Blessed Lord, by their protection
Shelter us from harm this day:
Keep us pure in flesh and spirit;
Save us from the Foe, we pray:
And vouchsafe us by Thy grace
In Thy paradise a place.

September 30.

Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. *1 Cor. 1, 30.*

Poor as we Christians may be in the goods of this world, we are rich, unspeakably rich, in spiritual treasures that far excel all the prized possessions of earthly-minded men and abide forever. God in His wonderful mercy Himself has made us so rich in Christ Jesus, our blessed Savior. We are rich in *wisdom*; for we know the true and only satisfactory answer to that all-important question: "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus tells us: "Whosoever believeth in Me shall not perish, but have everlasting life." We are rich, abundantly rich, in *righteousness* before the just and holy God, and no more fear His wrath on account of our sins. In Jesus we have the righteousness that availeth before God, even the forgiveness of sins, and may joyfully sing: "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, My beauty are, my glorious dress. Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head." And O blessed, O glorious riches! Jesus is made our *sanctification*. Though out of love for our dear Savior we daily strive to lead a virtuous, holy life, yet we realize how deficient our Christian conduct is, and know that all our own righteousness and holiness is as filthy rags before that holy God in whose sight even the holy angels are not pure. But here is Jesus with His perfect and vicarious keeping of the Law. He is ours by faith. So His perfect holiness is ours, and we can rejoice with the apostle: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Though we must all through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, yet how rich we are! For Jesus is our *redemption*; He will deliver us from all evil and take us through a blessed death into His everlasting realms of glory. There He will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and we shall rejoice in His presence forevermore. Knowing all this, how should we ever give up our faith and love in Jesus?

O Jesus, King most wonderful,
Thou Conqueror renowned,
Thou Sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!
When once Thou visitest the
heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine.

O Jesus, Light of all below,
Thou Fount of life and fire!
Surpassing all the joys we know,
All that we can desire,—
May every heart confess Thy
name,
And ever Thee adore;
And, seeking Thee, itself inflame
To seek Thee more and more.

October 1.

Now, there is at Jerusalem by the sheep-market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" *John 5, 2. 5. 6.*

Why does the Lord Jesus ask this poor invalid whether he wants to get well? Does not the question seem superfluous? No; for our Lord in His omniscience knew how long the poor man had suffered, — thirty-eight years, — and He knew also that the poor stricken man had given up all hope of ever being cured, and with dull, listless heart had resigned himself to his fate. But man's extremity is God's opportunity; and again we see what a merciful and omnipotent Savior we have in Christ. With His kind question He not only kindles new interest and hope in the poor invalid, but with divine, saving power restores him to health. There are many chronic invalids in our midst suffering year in and year out with some incurable disease, and they often grow apathetic and indifferent not only to their sickness, but, what is much worse, to the fate of their immortal souls. To them the Lord Jesus would also come in His saving, compassionate love and ask: Wilt thou be made whole? He may not restore them to bodily health as He did this invalid, for reasons known to Him alone, but He surely can and will give new courage and health to their mourning hearts and glorify their sickbeds and gloomiest surroundings with His saving presence. He has power to save all that come to God through Him. No case of bodily or spiritual infirmity is of too long standing or too hopeless a nature for *Him* to cure who says to every invalid: "I am the Lord that healeth thee."

With tearful eyes I look around;
Life seems a dark and stormy sea;
Yet, 'mid the gloom, I hear a sound,
A heavenly whisper, "Come to Me."
It tells me of a place of rest;
It tells me where my soul may flee:
Oh, to the weary, faint, opprest,
How sweet the bidding, "Come to Me."

"Come, for all else must fail and die!
Earth is no resting-place for thee;
To heaven direct thy weeping eye,
I am thy portion, Come to Me."

O voice of mercy! voice of love!
In conflict, grief, and agony,
Support me, cheer me from above;
And gently whisper, "Come to Me."

October 2.

The impotent man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." *John 5, 7.*

When the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, walked this earth, the heavens stood open, and the angels of God attended and served Him. *John 1, 51.* In His time one of these invisible ministering spirits stirred the pool of Bethesda and filled it with healing power, and whoever of the sick first entered the water was cured of his ailment. So this pool of Bethesda is a type of the saving water of Holy Baptism and was in its day a silent, yet forcible witness telling of the presence of the long-promised Savior in the midst of Israel. But what a fearful accusation lies in the complaint of the impotent man against his more favored fellow-men! Not one of them took pity on him and helped him into the miraculous healing pool, but, cold and merciless, left him to his sad fate. "I have no man to take pity on me, to care for my soul!" That is the complaint, the fearful accusation rising to heaven from countless lonely and forsaken stricken hearts. Our public charity institutions in our large cities and our county poor farms number many such sad cases. Perhaps there are such poor sufferers in our immediate neighborhood who are forgotten by the selfish world. Let us do what is in our power that they may hear the cheering word of their Savior, and let us lighten their burden with our gifts of sympathetic Christian love. Let us support our blessed Gospel-missions carried on by our fellow-Christians in many of our large cities among the sick and afflicted, the paupers and prisoners in the large public institutions. Then the blessed words of our Savior will apply to us, too: "I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Call them in, the poor, the wretched,
Sin-stained wanderers from the
fold;

Peace and pardon freely offer!
Can you weigh their worth with
gold?

Call them in, the weak, the weary,
Laden with the doom of sin;
Bid them come and rest in Jesus!
He is waiting; call them in!

Call them in, the broken-hearted,
Cowering 'neath the brand of
shame;

Speak love's message low and
tender!

'Twas for sinners Jesus came.

See the shadows lengthen round us,
Soon the day-dawn will begin;
Call them in, the lost and lonely;
Christ is coming; call them in!

October 3.

Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. *John 5, 14.*

What worse thing could come to the impotent man who had been sick thirty-eight years as a result of his sin and whom the Lord had so graciously cured at the pool of Bethesda? Thirty-eight years of pain, of restless days and often sleepless nights, is that not enough of misery, not enough of punishment? It ought to be; but when former patients fall back into their old evil habits, their last state is worse than the first. Not only does their bodily health suffer a dangerous relapse, but their immortal soul is in greatest danger. By relapsing into sin these people lose the faith they had perhaps found on their sickbed, lose God's grace, and if they persist in their godless ways and finally reach the brink of the grave, then comes the worst thing of all — in death they are cast by the wrath of the just God into outer darkness, where weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will be their lot forever. Damnation, eternal damnation, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, and the smoke of their torment goeth up forever and ever — that is the worse thing against which the Savior here warns the impotent man whom He had cured, and also all former patients. Let none of them forget that the goodness of God in which He restored them to health is a continual call to repentance. They owe it to their merciful Savior to spend the remaining years of their life in His service and not in the service of sin. May all the sick who sought and found God's mercy on their sickbed and vowed to give Him their life keep their sacred promise after their return to health and sin no more, lest a worse thing come to them. He has made our sin-sick souls whole through His saving grace in Jesus' blood. Oh, may He help us never to forget His great mercy toward us, but to thank and praise Him as long as we live!

Though able to offend
Thee, Lord, by sin and failing,
Still to regain Thy grace
My strength was unavailing.
Though I could fall from grace
And choose the way of sin,
I had no strength to rise,
A new life to begin.
But Thou hast raised me up,
And with divine compassion
Hast shown me, Lord, the way
That leadeth to salvation.

I thank Thee, Lord, that now
My former sins I hate,
And freely — not from fear —
Dead works abominate.
That I may not backslide,
But life in heaven inherit,
Grant me, while here I live,
O Lord, Thy Holy Spirit,
That He may give me strength
In mine infirmity,
And e'er renew my heart
To serve Thee willingly.

October 4.

There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. · 1 Tim. 2, 5. 6.

We sinners have to do in our reconciliation with the offended God not with many gods of warring minds, but with one God of one settled mind and purpose toward us. That is the one true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who declared His firm will and purpose for our salvation by sending His only-begotten Son into the world, by making Him our human flesh and blood that He might ransom us, that is, buy our liberty from sin, death, and hell with His holy, precious blood. He is God and man in one person; but the Apostle stresses the truth here that Jesus was and is *man*, in order to kindle in us loving trust and confidence in that one true God whose wonderful love spared not His own Son, but in due time redeemed us from sin through Him. Outside of Christ the holy God is a consuming fire for the sinner. In Christ He is our pardoning and loving Father. Hence if we lost sinners want to come to God and be saved, we must do so through the one and only Mediator — Christ Jesus. Nothing and no one can take Christ's place. No Mother Mary, no departed saints can supplant Him; no sacrifices, no penances, no works of our own can avail before God for our sins. Irrevocably and for all eternity God, the one true God who alone can save us, has declared His firm will and purpose to deal with the sinner, and pardon him, and receive him back into His grace alone through His appointed Mediator, Christ Jesus. Jew or Gentile, white or black, Roman Catholic or Protestant, millionaire or beggar, learned scientist or uneducated rustic, — it matters not, man can be saved alone by coming in faith to the one Mediator, Christ Jesus, who testifies to all men: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

Thou art the Way, to Thee alone
From sin and death we flee;
And He who would the Father seek,
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

Thou art the Truth, Thy Word alone
True wisdom can impart;
Thou only canst inform the mind
And purify the heart.

Thou art the Life, the rending tomb
Proclaims Thy conquering arm;
And those who put their trust in Thee
Nor death nor hell shall harm.

October 5.

Weep not! *Luke 7, 13.*

No mere expression of sincere yet ineffectual sympathy are these comforting words which our compassionate Savior addresses to the weeping widow of Nain. Neither would He in them forbid the stricken mother her bitter tears. He can well endure our sorrow for our departed loved ones, since He Himself could not refrain from tears at the grave of His friend Lazarus. These words of His: "Weep not," express more than commonplace sympathy; they contain the promise of His immediate and glorious help. He means to say: "Weep no more, but dry your tears. I will remove the cause of your grief." And He does so by restoring her dead boy to life, and thereby proves again beyond all doubt that He is the almighty Son of God, the Lord of life and death. In His divine and quickening word that raised the dead young man at Nain, our compassionate Savior still imparts His victory over death and the grave to all who will accept His help. Happy they who do it! But: "Alas, for him who never sees The stars shine through his cypress-trees! Who hopeless lays his dead away, Who hath not learned in hours of *faith* The truth to flesh and sense unknown: That Life is ever lord of death And Love can never lose its own." Let us learn in hours of faith that Christ, our compassionate Savior, has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Let us take that comforting and life-giving Gospel with us when we lay our dead away. Let us make it daily the anchor of our hope in death; then, when our last hour comes, we can say to our weeping loved ones: "Weep not for me. To live for me was Jesus, to die is gain. Meet me before His blessed throne, where we shall never part again."

Happy are the faithful dead,
Blessed who in Jesus die;
They from all their toils are freed,
In God's keeping safely lie.
These the Spirit hath declared
Blest, unutterably blest,
Jesus is their great reward,
Jesus is their endless rest.

Absent from our loving Lord
We shall not continue long;
Join we then with one accord
In the new, the joyful song;
Blessing, honor, thanks, and praise,
Triune God, we pay to Thee,
Who in Thine abundant grace
Givest us the victory!

October 6.

Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. *1 Pet. 2, 6.*

The Scriptures must be fulfilled. What the Lord, our God, prophesied long centuries before through His prophet Isaiah (chap. 28) concerning the foundation and precious corner-stone of His New Testament Zion has been fulfilled to the letter in the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth. Though a stumbling-block and offense to the wise and self-righteous of all times, Jesus has upheld His Church through all the storms of the centuries. Where is the proud Temple of Jerusalem? Where is the mighty Forum of Rome? Where are the colonnades of the Greek philosophers? They have all vanished like dry autumn leaves before the northern gale. But the house built on the elect and precious Corner-stone, Christ, the holy Christian Church, still stands, a miracle of God, and will stand secure to the end of time; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Whoever believes in Christ as his crucified and risen Savior has this immovable foundation under him and will never be confounded, will never be overthrown in his faith, will never suffer ruin. So many build the house of their happiness on their wealth, their wisdom, their health; but it is delusive quicksand on which they build. When the storms of adversity or death beat upon their house, it crashes into ruins. Man a man has bitterly regretted on his death-bed that he lived without Christ, but no one ever regretted having placed his hope in his Savior. The world and its alluring pleasures have deceived many; Jesus deceives no one that puts his trust in Him. O let us daily cast ourselves with all our sins and cares on Jesus, the elect and precious Corner-stone and Foundation of the sinners' salvation, and we shall never be confounded.

Behold the sure Foundation-stone
Which God in Zion lays,
To build our heavenly hopes upon,
And His eternal praise.

Chosen of God, to sinners dear,
Let saints adore the name;
They trust their whole salvation here,
Nor shall they suffer shame.

What though the gates of hell withstood,
Yet must this building rise:
'Tis Thine own work, Almighty God,
And wondrous in our eyes.

October 7.

And He said unto them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while"; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. *Mark 6, 31.*

The apostles had returned from their first missionary tour on which Jesus had sent them and now told all they had done and what they had taught. Our compassionate Savior, however, does not send them out again at once, but invites them to rest a while from their labors in some secluded desert place. In the hustle and bustle of the overcurious multitude about them they could not even find leisure to eat. "Rest a while!" So our dear Lord says also to His disciples nowadays. If we and all His children would only pay more attention to His gracious invitation and learn to separate ourselves from our multitudinous business or household cares and rest a while daily in His comforting and strengthening presence — what better Christians we all should be! But we here in America are all more or less possessed by the prevailing speed mania. Too many among us cannot work fast enough, earn money fast enough, live fast enough, and finally die fast enough. They, indeed, are to be accounted happy whom the Lord takes apart into the desert of the sickroom or other solitude and tells them: "Now rest a while and ponder the things eternal." Let us take time every day to go with Jesus into seclusion and by prayer and meditation in His saving Word to rest a while with Him. Every hour we spend needlessly in the company of worldly-minded men is lost, lost to us forever. Every minute we spend with our Lord is so much gain for a blessed eternity.

Alone with Thee! alone with Thee!
O Friend divine!
Thou Friend of friends, to me most dear;
Thou all unseen, I feel Thee near;
And, with the love that knows no fear,
I call Thee mine.

Alone with Thee! alone with Thee!
I want no more
To make my earthly bliss complete,
Than oft my Lord unseen to meet;
For sight I wait till tread my feet
Yon glistening shore.

Alone with Thee! alone with Thee!
There not alone,
But with all saints, the mighty throng,
My soul unfettered, pure, and strong
Her high communions shall prolong
Before Thy throne.

October 8.

Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. *Luke 13, 4. 5.*

Newspapers often bring reports of frightful disasters that caused great loss of life, and you will hear men, after reading them, say: "These terrible accidents prove that there is no wise and loving God, as the Bible declares, otherwise He would not permit such things to happen." What does Christ say of such catastrophes? We have His answer here in our text. He tells us not to judge rashly and harshly concerning the victims of such accidents. They were no greater sinners than other people are. Not what we have to say about these disasters, but what they have to say to us, is the all-important question. They are warning signals of our God, calling on us to repent and to save our souls alive. They are forerunners of His last great Judgment when He will bring to light all the secret deeds of men and reward them according to that they have done, be it good or evil. Oh, that men who read of these accidents would take God's warning voice in them to heart! But God must complain of them as He complains of impenitent Israel: "They have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." Jer. 5, 3. Oh, that at least we, when hearing or reading of such accidents, might ponder their solemn lesson! In the midst of life we are in death. Are we ready to meet our God to-day or at any other time? Let us daily live in repenting faith that clings to Christ alone, then no sudden fatal accident can pluck us out of the Savior's hand.

Who knows how near my end may be?
Time speeds away, and death comes on;
How swiftly, ah! how suddenly,
May death be here and life be gone!
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day.

The world that smiled when morn was come
May change for me ere close of eve;
So long as earth is still my home
In peril of my death I live.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day.

Teach me to ponder oft my end,
And ere the hour of death appears,
To cast my soul on Christ, her Friend,
Nor spare repentant cries and tears.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day.

October 9.

And Jesus called unto Him His disciples and saith unto them: "Verily, I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." *Mark 12, 43. 44.*

When we are asked to give for the support of our Savior's kingdom, do we always realize that our ever-present and all-seeing Lord still sits over against His treasury and beholds *in what spirit* we give for His cause? It was not the money the rich or the poor were giving in the Temple that He watched, but their *hearts*. The poor widow's two mites please Him so much more than all the big contributions of the rich, because she gives her few pennies with a heart glowing in gratitude and loving confidence to her God and Father in heaven. His Word, His sweet promises of grace cheered and comforted her in her lonely widowhood; she trusted her all to Him and gave her all for His kingdom. Oh, if we and our fellow-Christians only had such hearts glowing with gratitude for God's unspeakable gift, His dear Son and blessed Word with its heavenly light of comfort on all our dark paths through life, how much more abundantly and cheerfully would we give for His cause! Then His mission treasuries in our midst would never be empty. But because too many of us still hold to the wrong idea that they must live by the bread their money buys them, they are afraid to part with their money even for the Lord's sake. And yet it is the Lord and His saving Word and His daily blessing that keeps them alive; to Him they owe their all. Ah, what poor business men and accountants so many of us are when it comes to the Lord's business! Have we ever made a *sacrifice* for His cause, as this poor widow does, or have we given only what we pleased of our abundance? Are we living for self or for the Lord?

For souls redeemed, for sins forgiven,
For means of grace and hopes of heaven,
What can to Thee, O Lord, be given,
Who givest all?

We lose what on ourselves we spend,
We have, as treasure without end,
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend,
Who givest all.

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee
Who givest all.

October 10.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. *1 Thess. 5, 9, 10.*

The Puritan fathers of our country held firmly to Calvin's false doctrine that God has appointed the greater part of mankind to everlasting perdition. The consequence was that they were a gloomy and, in many respects, a fanatical people and that many of their descendants grew indifferent to their fathers' religion and fell away from Christianity altogether. However, the blessed Word of our God nowhere teaches this horrible doctrine of an election to perdition. The Bible teaches only the comforting election to salvation by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And what a sweet, comforting doctrine that is we learn again from the words just read, where the inspired apostle says that God has not appointed us to wrath, that He wants the damnation of no one, but has rather appointed, ordered, elected His believing children to obtain salvation in Christ Jesus, who redeemed them from sin and wrath by His atoning death and made them His own to be saved and to live forever with Him, whether they wake or sleep! Oh, what blessed comfort that is! Many a one has laid himself down to sleep at night who did not awake in the morning. Many a one left home in the morning who was brought back a corpse at night. In the midst of life we are in death. But blessed are we if we are the Lord's by true and sincere faith; then even a sudden death cannot harm us, and is no sign of God's wrath against us, but only serves as a quick and painless *entrance* to that sweet and undisturbed rest that still remaineth for the people of God.

Lord, it belongs not to my care
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.

If life be long, oh, make me glad
The longer to obey;
If short, no laborer is sad
To end his toilsome day.

Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes
Must enter by this door.

Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet
Thy blessed face to see:
For if Thy work on earth is sweet,
What will Thy glory be?

October 11.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. *Heb. 12, 1. 2.*

We often grow weary under the burdens which we must carry on our pilgrimage through life. Every new morning brings with it new labor and new trials, and every evening sees some task unfinished. Every day we must fight anew the old, old battle with sin, the world, and Satan; and it is just this continual fight that makes the Christian's heart so weary and faint. But then the pious children of God who lived before us and had the same war to wage are to encourage us with their victorious example. The faith of Abraham, the wrestling of Jacob with God in prevailing prayer, the fortitude of Joseph in temptation, the denial of the world's pomp and power by Moses, David's devotion, Jeremiah's tears, Peter's repentance, Paul's zeal for Christ and His kingdom — all teach us how we can run our race with patience and win the crown of everlasting life. They were all human as we are, beset by the same temptations to grow weary and give up; yet they endured, they finally conquered. Why? Because they looked up in persevering faith to Jesus, their Savior, and found in Him the needed courage and help. Let us do the same. Beneath all our burdens let us go with our weary heart to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and His strength will be made perfect in our weakness. Does He not tenderly invite us: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"?

Only a few more burdens must we carry
In heat and toil beneath the scorching sun;
Only a little longer must we tarry —
Only a little longer "till He come!"

Only a little more of life's long journey
Through the world's desert till the day is done;
Only a few more desert scenes of conflict,
Only a few more Marahs "till He come!"

Only a little longer, thinking gladly
Of the uprising of the brighter Sun;
Only a little longer, waiting sadly
In the fast-falling twilight "till He come!"

So let our eyes be on Him in His absence,
Seeking to serve Him in this day of grace;
While the thought cheers us in our constant sadness:
Soon He will come and meet us face to face.

October 12.

Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? *Luke 14, 3.*

We Christians, of course, know that it is not against God's holy Law to cure the sick or perform any other work of mercy on any day of the week, be it Sunday or not. But the blind Pharisees in Christ's time held it unlawful to do so on the Sabbath; and so our Savior by word and deed must teach them the contrary. On the Sabbath He heals a man who had the dropsy, and asks them the convincing question: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?" Jesus has forever freed us from the old Jewish Sabbath law. We now know only one Sabbath, and that is the blessed Sabbath, or rest, of the heart that we find by faith in Him. To keep this Sabbath of the heart unbroken should be our chief object in life. Hence our Sundays ought to be real days of rest and of communion with Him. Alas! too many make their Sunday a day of unnecessary work or, in most cases, a day of worldly pleasure. They will not go to church and feast their starving souls on the Bread of Life in Christ's sweet Gospel, but they will lounge around their homes or offices until supper time and go and feast their eyes on the suggestive pictures and acts shown at the theater. Said a broken-hearted mother bursting into tears: "O my child; my child! He is just committed to prison; and I fear he will never return to his father's house. Oh, that theater! He was a virtuous, kind boy till the theater proved his ruin!" But no Christian parents will let their sons and daughters go to the theater at any time, rather seek to make home pleasant for them, *especially on Sundays*. As we and our children spend our Sundays, so our week-days, so our lives will be influenced for good or for evil. God help us to sanctify especially our Sundays by His Word, by prayer, by doing deeds of Christian love, and by keeping only Christian company.

This is the day of rest:
Our failing strength renew;
On weary brain and troubled
 breast
Shed Thou Thy freshening dew.

This is the day of peace:
Thy peace our spirits fill;
Bid Thou the blasts of discord
 cease,
The waves of strife be still.

This is the day of prayer:
Let earth to heaven draw near;
Lift up our hearts to seek Thee
 there;
Come down to meet us here.

This is the first of days:
Send forth Thy quickening breath,
And wake dead souls to love and
 praise,
O Vanquisher of death!

October 13.

Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. *Gal. 6, 9.*

Faith *makes* the Christian, deeds of love *prove* the Christian. And yet, how that old heathen emperor who was wont to exclaim: "I have lost a day," when he had done no deed of kindness, puts so many a Christian to shame! Why do we so often hold back in doing good? Is it because we see how little others do; or because so many demands — we often think too many demands — are made on our charity; or because our acts of helpful love do not meet with the gratitude and appreciation they deserve in our eyes? But away with all such selfish thoughts! Did our Lord grow weary in well-doing? Did He always find the praise and gratitude His self-sacrificing love deserved? We know He did not. And yet He never wearied of helping and teaching, and suffering wrong, and finally He died even for His enemies. Or are we to do good only for the sake of being seen and praised of men, as the vain Pharisees did in our Savior's time? Does our Lord not tell us to do our good deeds in secret, not letting our left hand know what our right hand does, and that our Father who seeth in secret will Himself reward us openly? Yea, has not our heavenly Father rewarded and paid us in advance for all the good we do? Luther one day rightly remarked to his friend Jonas, who, giving a beggar an alms, exclaimed, "Who knows when God will pay me back." "Jonas," said Luther, "God has paid you in advance long ago." What would we have or be without God's boundless blessings? So let us do good wherever we can out of gratitude to God, and not grow weary; for He does not grow weary in blessing us. Every kind word we say, every kind act we do for His sake is rich seed for eternity, and even there will meet with our heavenly Father's great reward.

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love;
Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

October 14.

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. *2 Thess. 3, 10.*

Here we learn from the apostle that God has no use for any man who will not work. Both the idle rich and the idle poor are an abomination to God. No man has a right to shirk honest toil, be he who he may. Unto every man God has given a talent which he is to use for his own welfare and the benefit of his fellow-men. Woe to him if he wraps it in the napkin of idleness! God will call him to account one day. It is wrong, therefore, to assist professional beggars and tramps. They are thieves, stealing and wasting the time and opportunity God has given them for useful labor. If they will not work, then they should not eat. But from this admonition of the apostle we learn also that Christianity does not unfit its followers for useful and effectual labor in this world. It is a sad perversion of our blessed Savior's teachings when men and women think that they can attain to a holier life if they forsake this workaday world and enter the monastery or cloister. How often facts come to light which show that the devil has his workshop also in these institutions! Ever since our blessed Lord removed the curse of sin from us, He has also removed the curse resting on our labor. Now work is a blessing for which we cannot thank our God enough. Let us thank God if we are able to work, and let us work as Christians, not as men-pleasers, not for selfish ends, but as the servants of God. The most zealous, faithful, and trustworthy employees in any calling are always the true Christians.

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the morning hours;
Work while the dew is sparkling,
Work 'mid springing flowers;
Work when the day grows brighter,
Work in the glowing sun;
Work, for the night is coming,
When man's work is done.

Work, for the night is coming,
Work through the sunny noon;
Fill brightest hours with labor,
Rest comes sure and soon:
Give every flying minute
Something to keep in store:
Work, for the night is coming,
When man works no more.

October 15.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. *Jer. 29, 11.*

Known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the world. He never makes mistakes. He knows why He often leads us the tearful paths, though we may not know. When great sorrow and tribulation come upon us, we are so apt to think that God has forsaken us, that He has hidden His face in wrath from us, and will not hear our cries for help. Then our sins rise mountain-high before us, and we think we are doomed. But in the case of true Christians God's chastisements are never a punishment for sin. They are always prompted by His saving love. "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Num. 23, 19. Here in His ever truthful Word our faithful God assures us that He has thoughts only of peace in all His dealings with us. "Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." Lam. 3, 32, 33. Oh, let us in all our trials and sorrows keep this blessed purpose of our God in mind, namely, that all His dispensations have but one aim, one object: to give us an expected end. What end do we expect? Certainly, that God will one day deliver us from all evil and graciously take us from this vale of tears into heaven, where no sin, no sorrow, no sighing shall ever trouble us again. If that be our hope, our expectation, we shall resign ourselves to God's good guidance and not try to go our own way. We should never reach heaven in that case.

The will of God shall be my pleasure,
While here on earth is mine abode;
My will is wrong beyond all measure,
It doth not will what pleaseth God.
The Christian's maxim e'er must be:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

My God desires the soul's salvation,
Me also He desires to save;
Therefore, with Christian resignation,
All earthly troubles I will brave.
His will be done eternally:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

October 16.

Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Then Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." *John 6, 67—69.*

It is a heart-searching question our Lord puts to us to-day. And the question increases in penetrating power the more we consider the sad times in which we live. Whither we look, we see the world full of unbelief grown bold and unabashed. Men no longer whisper it in secret, but preach it from the housetops: "There is no God! The Bible is an obsolete book full of fairy tales! There is no hereafter! Christ never rose from the dead! Science alone is true! Let us live and die in the light of Science!" And, alas! countless numbers of former Christians listen to this blatant voice of our unbelieving age and forsake Christ and His saving Word. But what do they gain by making the change? Science cannot give them what Christ, their Savior, gave them in His divine Gospel: forgiveness of sins, peace of heart, comfort in all afflictions, immortal hope in the hour of death. Poor, woefully deceived backsliders. What a terrible awakening will come to them when they must face their God and Judge in heaven, who says: "If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him"! Oh, may the merciful God help us not to be of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul! Heb. 10, 38. 39. Let us watch and pray, and when tempted to join the great majority in its apostasy, let us firmly and persistently declare: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus, whither shall I go,	If I foolishly depart
Thee, my Savior, if I leave?	From the ark of Thy dear breast,
Only Thou canst see my woe,	Where shall my unsettled heart
Only Thou canst pardon give.	Find a ground whereon to rest?
None beside can save from sin;	Whither or to whom shall I
None beside can make me clean.	From myself for succor fly?

No, my God! if from the Way,
 From the Truth if I remove,
 Must I not forever stray,
 On in error's mazes rove,
 Rove from peace to troublous strife,
 Rove to death from endless life?

October 17.

Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?

Job 35, 10.

What a wonderful and adorable God we have in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is in truth the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. Though He correct us, He does it as our loving Father, seeking only our good and never our destruction. With the chastening rod He always brings the apple of sweet hope and comfort to His weeping children. He gives them songs in the night, fills their heart with love and confidence in Him that they can praise and glorify His great mercy and truth even in their tears. Listen to the deathless song of Job in the night of his nameless misery: "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" Hear Moses sing in joyful trust on the border of the grave: "I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Deut. 32, 3. 4. Read the immortal psalms of the inspired singer David and the dear old hymns of cross and comfort in our hymn-book, and behold how the Christian's night of sorrow is flooded with sweetest melody; for God has ever given songs in the night to His weeping children. And they are given for our instruction, our hope, our comfort. So let us make diligent use of them when trouble and affliction come upon us. Let us not murmur against God's wise and loving dispensations; let us not give way to dumb grief and despair; but let us prayerfully read and sing these sweet psalms and songs, and we shall find there is divine power in them to lift our hearts out of the slough of despond and to fill them with abiding peace and "hope that maketh not ashamed."

I hear it singing, singing sweetly,
Softly in an undertone,
Singing as God's Word hath taught it —
"It is better farther on."

Night and day unceasing sings it,
Sings it while I sit alone,
Sings it so the heart can hear it —
"It is better farther on."

Farther on? Then how much farther?
Count the milestones one by one?
No; no counting, only trusting
"It is better farther on."

October 18.

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." *Matt. 16, 24.*

How ugly is sin, and how degrading its evil power! We see this every day in the lives of unconverted men. Can there be a more disgusting and pitiful sight than a man who cannot control his passion for drink or morphine? What vile diseases carnal lust causes in men and women! How so-called gentlemen often shock others by their foul and blasphemous language because they cannot control their temper. And though unregenerate men may succeed in leading an outwardly moral and respectable life, on closer acquaintance you will find them filled with pride, or vanity, or avarice, or malice, or other ugly, sinful traits of character. Jesus would save His followers from this debasing power of sin. He, therefore, calls His Christians into the school of self-denial and cross-bearing. Sessions in this school are held every day. Every day His pupils must learn to resist the suggestions of their own sin-corrupted hearts, must learn to say no to evil companions who would lead them to play the truant, and instead of enjoying the alluring pleasures of the wicked world must deny its lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. It is not an easy school to be in; but it is a most ennobling and refining school. The longer you are in it, the better you like it; for the Master becomes dearer to you every day, and His wise and kind precepts and His inspiring example set your heart aglow with the holy desire to become more and more like Him. When your lesson in cross-bearing is too hard for you, before you know it, He is at your side and carrying the heaviest end, and encouraging, and comforting you. And when school closes, what then? The end of the poor devotee of sin and pleasure is death. You who have gone to Christ's school shall graduate into the high school above where all self-denial and cross-bearing is at an end, and the divine diploma of "Well done," and, above all, perfect holiness in the image of the Master is yours forever.

O love, how cheering is thy ray!
All pain before thy presence flies:
Care, anguish, sorrow, melt away,
Where'er thy healing beams arise.
O Jesus, nothing may I see,
Nothing desire or seek but Thee!

October 19.

Then said one unto Him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" And He said unto them, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able."

Luke 13, 23. 24.

All kinds of questions were put to our Lord, and He answered them. But never did He simply gratify the idle curiosity that often prompted these questions. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. In His answers He always aims at the heart, seeking to arouse the conscience and to bring man to saving repentance and faith. So here. If few or many be saved — that is not our concern, but God's. Let Him look after that. Our chief concern must be that we ourselves are saved, and for that reason we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, the only gate that leads to heaven, which is none other than enduring faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us note this answer of our Lord and follow His wise example when curious, even malicious people ask us all kinds of perplexing questions in order to shake us in our faith. We often hear such questions as these raised: "What did God do before He made the world? Why doesn't God kill the devil? What kind of place is heaven anyway?" and so forth. Let us say to such a questioner: "Friend, if you really care for an answer to your question, then you had best concern yourself about the most important of all questions: What must I do to be saved? If you have found the answer to that question, — and you can find it without much trouble in the Gospel of Christ, — then you will learn the answer to all these questions one day. God Himself will answer them for you. He knows more about them than I do, and so I must refer you to Him." That may not satisfy the curious questioner, but it will shut his mouth. We have neither the duty nor the right to answer questions for which God has not furnished us the answer in His Word.

Word of the ever-living God,
Will of His glorious Son;
Without Thee how could earth be trod,
Or heaven itself be won?

Lord, grant us all aright to learn
The wisdom it imparts,
And to its heavenly teaching turn
With simple, childlike hearts.

October 20.

What think ye of Christ? *Matt. 22, 42.*

This solemn question of our Lord every man is compelled to answer. There is no escape from it. No man can say: "Christ is nothing to me. I do not care to answer that question." God Himself demands the answer; and as men answer it, so they decide their own fate for time and eternity. The Pharisees, to whom Christ first put the question, failed in their answer; yet they could have known the true reply, for they were versed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which plainly teach the deity of our Lord. But instead of following the clear Word of God, they followed their own blind reason, just as do our scribes and Pharisees of the present time, who admit that Christ was a wise teacher, a great miracle-worker, the most perfect model of love and virtue the world has ever seen, and therefore in a certain sense "divine"; but they refuse to believe that He is true *God*, begotten of the Father from eternity. So they all come under the condemning sentence of Christ: "If ye believe not that I am He, — namely, the promised Redeemer, — ye shall die in your sins." John 8, 24. No one but Christ has saved us from sin or can save us. There is salvation in none other. But if Christ had merely been man and not God made manifest in the flesh, then His suffering and dying for us would profit us nothing; for no man can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him, as Scripture declares. Hence our Savior had to be true God. Because His atoning blood is the blood of *God's Son*, therefore it cleanses us from all sin. — What do *we* think of Christ? God in His mercy help us to say with a sincere and upright heart that is filled with grateful, loving faith: "Christ is my Lord and God. Though thousands be ashamed to own Him to-day, I will confess Him as my God and my Redeemer."

Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.

Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then — nor is my boasting vain —
Till then I boast a Savior slain!
And, O may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!

October 21.

Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. *Is. 57, 15.*

Our God is holy. All iniquity is an abomination in His pure sight. His wrath, provoked by sin, is like consuming fire. They do not know our God who make Him out a weak, indulgent parent that scolds at the wrong-doing of His wicked children, but never punishes them severely for it. No! While our God is indeed long-suffering and abundant in goodness and mercy, He is also a zealous God who can and does destroy the impenitent sinner, both body and soul, in hell. Matt. 10, 28. And yet this holy God says that He dwells with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, that is, with him that has learned to fear and tremble at God's great holiness on account of his sin. God dwells with him to revive and gladden him with His divine goodness. How can these things be? Does God now cast aside aught of His holiness in order to befriend the contrite, penitent sinner? How can He who is eternal and unchangeable in all His attributes? But look to the cross of Calvary! Why does God's own dear Son suffer that awful death of the sinner on the accursed tree? Because God is holy! Yes, the death of our Savior proclaims to us not only the wonderful love of God for our sin-lost race, but also God's inviolable holiness that never could brook the sinner in His presence till all the demands of His divine righteousness were satisfied and all sin atoned for. Oh, how we ought to fear to indulge the least little sin when we remember what it cost our Savior to redeem us from its guilt and power! His precious blood does not only cry with a loud voice better than Abel's: "Mercy! Mercy!" but also: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" Sinners, you are bought with the price of Christ's divine blood; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Renew me, O eternal Light,
And let my heart and soul be bright,
Illumined with the light of grace
That issues from Thy holy face.
Destroy in me the lust of sin,
From all impureness make me clean,
O grant me power and strength, my God,
To strive against my flesh and blood.
Create in me a new heart, Lord,
That gladly I obey Thy Word,
And naught but what Thou wilt, desire;
With such new life my soul inspire.

October 22.

Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. *1 Cor. 4, 1. 2.*

Here the inspired apostle gives us a most necessary instruction concerning the holy ministry. He tells all Christians how they are to regard their pastors. Though pastors are called into their office by men, by the congregation, they are not therefore men-servants, but Christ's servants, who through the congregation calls them and who has endowed them with the necessary gifts for their sacred service. They are charged by Christ to preach His saving Word to men that they may thus be brought to repentance and faith in Him and be saved. Whenever our pastors come to us with a clear word of God, we must hear and obey them; for the Lord says to them: "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." Luke 10, 16. In these days of false prophets let us thank God on bended knees if we have a faithful pastor who teaches and preaches God's saving Word in all its purity to us and by his whole conduct shows that he knows no higher purpose than to save his own immortal soul and the souls entrusted to his care. Let us not be guilty of the grievous sin which so many church-members commit who never have a kind word for their pastor, but only harsh criticism, because he is no great orator, or fine society man, or does not always dance to their lute. No Christian has the right to demand of his pastor more than that he be found faithful in his holy calling; for God Himself asks no more of His ministers. Then let us gladly do what the apostle further says, Gal. 6, 6: "Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things," and we ourselves shall reap the greatest blessing. We want our pastors to pray for *us*; let us not forget to pray for *them*.

O Almighty God, who by Thy Son, Jesus Christ, didst give to Thy holy apostles many excellent gifts, and commendedst them earnestly to feed Thy flock; make, we beseech Thee, all pastors diligently to preach Thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

October 23.

Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ. 2 Cor. 3, 3.

High and holy is the calling of every Christian according to these words of the apostle. The Christian is to be an open and unsealed epistle, or letter, of Christ. In his life, or conduct, he is to reveal something of the love, the meekness, the gentleness, the holiness that distinguished his Savior, so that every man who knows him can point him out and say of him: "There goes a true Christian!" We all know that example is better than precept and that words are dwarfs, while deeds are giants. The children of this world have a sharp eye on churchgoers and professed Christians. Because so many nowadays go to church of a Sunday and profess Christ with their lips, but otherwise live and act as the children of this world, joining them in their sinful pleasures and sharp business practises, they are despised for their hypocrisy and are often told to their face by their friends in the world: "We are more honest than you are. We at least make no profession of Christianity." It is only too true, because so many churchgoers are *Christians in name only*. But even unbelievers honor and respect a man who is a consistent Christian, in whose life they can read, as in an open letter, his sincere loyalty and devotion to his Savior. Many of them do not hesitate to say: "I wish I could be such a man! If I knew I could be, I'd join his church to-morrow!" Because the first Christians proved such impressive letters of Christ even in the terrible persecutions that befell them, they won so many of their heathen fellow-men for Christ and His Gospel. Whose spirit rules our life? What kind of message are we in our daily conduct to the world around us? May we never shame our profession of faith by unchristian conduct; but may we with the help of God's Holy Spirit ever prove indelible and winning epistles of Christ.

Stand up! — stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone!
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own:
Put on the Gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there.

Stand up! — stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next, the victor's song.
To him that overcometh,
A crown of life shall be;
He with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally!

October 24.

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast; the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." *John 12, 20. 21.*

Wise Men from the East came to worship at the manger of Bethlehem. They wanted to see Jesus, the new-born King of the Jews. Here descendants of wise men from the West, from beautiful and learned Greece, come to the Passover Feast at Jerusalem and want to see Jesus. In a few days they saw Him on the cross, crowned with thorns, suffering and dying as the King of the Jews, as the King and Redeemer of the world. Blessed were they if they saw Him then with the eyes of faith as the Lamb of God that atoned also for their sins. But the desire of these Greeks to see Jesus — does it not again teach us how all the beauty, and art, and philosophy, and natural religion of the world cannot satisfy the longing of man's soul for higher and better things, in short, for communion with the true and living God? That longing only Jesus and His love can satisfy. No matter how rich, how fortunate men may be, how smooth and sunny their pathway through life, so long as they have not seen Jesus, they have never tasted true happiness. Blessed the man who, like Philip here, can show Jesus to inquiring souls. But in order to do that, we must know Jesus ourselves, live in His blessed communion, as did Philip, and Andrew, and the other apostles. Is our heart filled with longing love to see Jesus face to face some day because we have found in Him the consummation of our soul's deepest wants and desires?

We would see Jesus; for the shadows lengthen
Across this little landscape of our life;
We would see Jesus, our weak faith to strengthen
For the last weariness, the final strife.
We would see Jesus; other lights are paling,
Which for long years we have rejoiced to see;
The blessings of our pilgrimage are failing;
We would not mourn them, for we go to Thee.
We would see Jesus; yet the spirit lingers
Round the dear objects it has loved so long,
And earth from earth can scarce unclasp its fingers;
Our love to Thee makes not this love less strong.
We would see Jesus; sense is all too binding,
And heaven appears too dim, too far away;
We would see Thee, Thyself our hearts reminding
What Thou hast suffered our great debt to pay.
We would see Jesus; this is all we're needing;
Strength, joy, and willingness come with the sight;
We would see Jesus, dying, risen, pleading;
Then welcome day, and farewell mortal night.

October 25.

And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon His name, declare His doings among the people, make mention that His name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for He hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Is. 12, 1—6.

Most gloriously does this prophecy in Isaiah stand fulfilled before our eyes to this very day. For long centuries God's redeemed children suffered and groaned as helpless captives under the tyranny of the Pope. All songs of joy had died on their lips, for all the wells of salvation were clogged and choked by the false, soul-destroying doctrines of popery. Then the Lord had mercy on His captive children and sent His chosen champion of saving Gospel-truth, the miner's son, Martin Luther, who in the power of God again cleansed the wells of salvation that the water of life could once more gush forth freely. Whosoever will can now drink of the pure, undefiled spring of God's mercy in Christ and sing joyful songs of praise to his Redeemer.

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor,
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never:
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is the Mediator.

Since Christ hath full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation:
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Thy death my life now is indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.

October 26.

Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. *Matt. 9, 2.*

After the rise of popery it was a long, long time till the poor Christians again heard the voice of their Savior forgiving them their sins in His gracious and infallible Word. During the Babylonian Captivity of the Church under popery, the Gospel of forgiveness and salvation by grace through faith in the all-sufficient merit of our Lord Jesus Christ was unknown to our forefathers. Instead they were told to perform all kinds of penance, to make pilgrimages, to buy indulgences, and, if they wanted to make sure of their pardon with God, to enter a cloister and become monks or nuns. Even when sick and dying, the comfort of forgiveness for Christ's sake was withheld from them, and they were taught to believe that they would have to suffer untold tortures in purgatory for their unforgiven sins until the priest, by his Mass and prayers, had released them. We would still be in this terrible power of popery and suffer the agony of soul which our poor forefathers suffered if God in His boundless mercy had not restored unto us the light of His saving Gospel through Luther. But now we no longer need to go to auricular confession, where the priest sits as judge and has the power to impose all kinds of penances upon people. As often as our sins assail us, and Satan accuses us, we can open our Bible and read this comforting word of our Savior: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Christ alone secured pardon for our sins. He alone has the right and the power to forgive them. And He does forgive them in His holy Word which we read or hear. When He says to the penitent sinner: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," that is then no mere ineffectual, kind wish, but in that word sin is really and effectually forgiven. O blessed people that we are in having restored to us the pure Gospel with its sweet assurance of the forgiveness of our sins in Christ, our only Redeemer!

The Gospel shows the Father's grace,
Who sent His Son to save our race,
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died
That man might thus be justified.

It brings the Savior's righteousness
Our souls to robe in royal dress;
From all our guilt it brings release,
And gives the troubled conscience peace.

It is the power of God to save
From sin and Satan and the grave;
It works the faith which firmly clings
To all the treasures which it brings.

October 27.

Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. *Eph. 2, 20.*

Our dear Lutheran Church is not a new church founded by Martin Luther four hundred years ago, as its enemies so maliciously maintain. Though we bear the name of Luther, we do not believe in Luther nor in a single word he said, unless he proved its truth from the holy Word of God. Luther himself claimed no authority to teach anything outside of the inspired Scriptures. He writes most emphatically: "So Luther himself will not be a Lutheran, except in so far as he purely teaches the Holy Scripture." And again he declares: "The Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith; nothing else, not even an angel from heaven." When a question arises concerning Christian doctrine or life, our Lutheran Church will accept neither the decision of human reason, nor the tradition of the church-fathers, nor any new revelation, but simply asks: "What does the Word of God say in the matter?" When that question has been answered, then the matter is decided finally and for all time. We Lutherans can boldly challenge all our enemies to point out one single article of faith our Church holds that is not clearly taught in the Bible. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is our rule and guide in matters of faith, and our Lord Jesus Christ and His saving merit is our only hope of salvation. We must bear the "nickname" Lutheran which the papists gave to Luther and his followers, because it has now become historic. But we really ought to be called *Bible-Christians*, for our faith is built alone on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. With the old confessor of Reformation days we can say: "My faith is not built on Luther; he did not die for me; he is not my God and Savior. And in this sense I am not a Lutheran. But if I be asked whether I profess the doctrine of Holy Scripture which Luther has restored to us, then I am not ashamed to call myself a Lutheran. In this sense I am and will remain a Lutheran as long as I live."

Then here, my Church! my dear old Church!
Thy child would add a vow
To that whose token once was signed
Upon his infant brow: —
Assault who may, kiss and betray,
Dishonor and disown,
My Church shall yet be dear to me,
My fathers' and my own!

October 28.

And Jesus answered and said unto him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Matt. 16, 17. 18.

Roman Catholics point us to this Bible-passage as the supposed Scriptural proof for their claim that Christ has made their Pope the head and ruler of the Church, and that the Pope, when speaking officially, is infallible and cannot make a mistake. But this passage teaches nothing of the kind. Christ here pronounces Peter blessed, that is, happy. And why is he called blessed? Because he has, perhaps, been made the head and ruler of the Church? By no means. Why then? Because the Father who is in heaven has revealed to him the saving truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Verse 16. It is quite evident therefore that Peter is pronounced blessed because God has revealed and made known unto him the saving truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior. There is not a word here about Simon Peter having been made the head and ruler of the Church. — Christ continues: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter." The name *Peter* signifies *Rockman*, a man who is on a rock. This rock is Christ. 1 Cor. 10, 4. Christ is the only and unshakable rock of our eternal happiness and salvation. Now, the Lord does not simply say: "Thou art Peter," but at once adds: "And upon this Rock I will build My Church." If the claim of the Romanists were correct, then Christ would have said: "And upon thee, Peter, I will build My Church." But this He did not say. He said: "And upon this Rock," namely, on Me, "I will build My Church." Christ clearly wants to say: I have called thee *Peter*, Rockman, for building thy faith on Me, the Rock. But think not that thou alone art built upon Me, the true Rock. No; My Church, all who truly believe in Me, shall be built on Me. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against My Church, shall not succeed in destroying it. — From the false claim that the Pope at Rome is the head and ruler of the Church and from the consequent fearful priest-rule God has delivered us through Luther.

When Rome had shrouded earth in night,
God said again, Let there be light!
And Luther with the Gospel came
To spread the truth in Jesus' name.

October 29.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;
and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;
and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matt. 16, 19.

"Here you see," say the Pope's followers, "that the Roman Catholic Church is the only saving church; for Christ gave the power to forgive and to retain sins alone to Peter, and from him this power has descended on his legitimate successors in office, the Popes." But what does Christ intend to say when He says to Peter: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"? From the inseparable connection of the words with the foregoing it is clear beyond contradiction that Christ promised and gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven as a privilege of office just as little as Christ had promised him blessedness, or salvation, as such a privilege. The fact is that Christ gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven just as He had given him blessedness, namely, as a privilege and treasure of his *faith*. Because of his *faith* Christ had first pronounced him blessed, because of his *faith* He had called him and every member of the Church *Peter*, because of his *faith* He now, in conclusion, also awards him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. — There is no doubt, then, that Christ, according to our text, gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven in Peter to all who believe and confess as did Peter and who, accordingly, like Peter, are built by faith on Christ, the Rock, that is, He gave the keys to His whole Church and to every member thereof who has true faith. . . . Matthew, chapter 18, Christ, having described in what manner the *Church* is to expel certain members, adds: "Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Is it possible to bring forth testimony more indisputable than this in evidence of the teaching that Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven to every church, or congregation, in all its believing members? Christ Himself could not explain more clearly whom He meant when saying to Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." *

* Walther, *Brosamen*, p. 466.

October 30.

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord. *Ps. 130, 1.*

An incomparable hymn, based on Psalm 130, was composed by Luther in the year 1523. It is sung all over the world, even by the Romanists, and, translated into English, reads as follows:—

Out of the depths I cry to Thee,
Lord, hear my lamentation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,
And grant my supplication;
For if Thou fix Thy searching eye
On all sin and iniquity,
Who, Lord, can stand before Thee?

But love and grace with Thee prevail,
O God, our sins forgiving;
The best and holiest deeds must fail
Of all before Thee living;
Before Thee none can boasting stand,
But all must fear Thy strict demand,
And live alone by mercy.

My hope I rest, then, on the Lord,
And build not on my merit;
My heart shall trust His gracious Word,
His goodness stays my spirit.
His precious Word assureth me,
He will my Joy and Comfort be;
This is my firm reliance.

And though it tarry till the night
And till the morn appeareth,
My heart still trusteth in His might,
It doubteth not, nor feareth.
Do thus, O ye of Israel's seed,
Ye of the Spirit born indeed,
Wait for your God's appearing.

Though great our sins and sore our woes,
His grace much more aboundeth;
His helping love no limit knows,
Our utmost need it soundeth,
Our Shepherd is the Lord, and He
At last shall set His Israel free
From all their sin and sorrow.

October 31.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge.

Ps. 46, 11.

From this "heroic" forty-sixth Psalm Luther drew his inspiration for his "heroic" battle-cry of Evangelical Christendom, for his world-famous hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." On this ever-memorable 31st day of October, he nailed his 95 Theses, protesting against the infamous sale of indulgences, to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg. In the very first thesis he strikes the keynote of the Reformation. He writes: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ saith: '*Repent ye,*' etc., He intended that the whole life of His believers on earth should be a constant repentance." Himself unaware of the fact, Luther had now begun the great work of his life, the work that resulted in restoring the Gospel to Pope-ridden Christendom. The Reformation is not *his* work, but *God's* work. He was only God's chosen instrument. For thirty long years he, the lowly monk, battled for the truth as it is in Jesus, at first almost single-handed, against Pope and emperor and all the fanatical and heretical foes that assailed the Gospel in his day. Yet he never yielded an inch of the holy ground on which he stood, the ground of God's saving Word. Whence did he derive this wonderful, world-conquering faith? Our text gives us the answer: The Lord of hosts was with him, the God of Jacob was his Refuge. The hammer blows with which he on this day startled the world still resound through all lands. All opposition, all persecution could not drown their rallying cry: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." Rev. 14, 7. The Lord of hosts was with His restored Gospel and is with it to-day. No matter, therefore, how dark the future may look to the Church of the pure Word and Sacrament, we will not fear, "though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; for the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge." God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall to eternity endure.

The Word they still shall let
remain,
And not a thank have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.

And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife:
Let these all be gone,
They yet have nothing won;
The kingdom ours remaineth.

November 1.

Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting. *Is. 63, 16.*

This first day of November is kept by the Roman Catholics with great veneration as the Feast of All Saints. They worship the departed saints and call on them, especially on Mother Mary, to help them in their troubles and to intercede for them with Christ. What pitiful blindness! Abraham, the father of the faithful, and Israel, that is, the patriarch Jacob, are great saints, not by the Pope's, but by God's declaration; for their faith and pious life is clearly revealed and extolled in God's holy Word. Yet our text tells us that both these great saints know nothing of us. And if *they* are ignorant of us and our needs, how much less will lesser saints, the countless imaginary saints of the Pope's making, know of us! What use is there, then, in praying to them? Who does so ascribes to them an honor belonging to God alone. He in fact commits idolatry and sins against the clear command of the Savior: "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve." When the centurion at Caesarea, Cornelius, fell at Peter's feet to worship him, the apostle at once commanded: "Stand up; I myself also am a man." Acts 10, 26. When the people at Lystra wanted to show divine honors to Paul and Barnabas, the apostles would not tolerate it. Acts 14, 15. No living saint wanted to be adored, but with the departed saints in heaven gave all glory, all worship to God. We are not to invoke the saints, but to follow their example and seek all help from the true and living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our only Helper and Redeemer.

For all Thy saints, O Lord,
Who strove in Thee to live,
Who followed Thee, obeyed, adored,
Our grateful hymn receive.

For all Thy saints, O Lord,
Accept our thankful cry,
Who counted Thee their great reward,
And strove in Thee to die.

They all in life and death,
With Thee, their Lord, in view,
Learned from Thy Holy Spirit's breath
To suffer and to do.

For this Thy name we bless,
And humbly pray that we
May follow them in holiness,
And live and die in Thee.

November 2.

Speaking the truth in love. *Eph. 4, 15.*

Lutheran Christians have every reason to be courageous Christians. They know what they believe and why they believe. They have God's Word and God's Word has *them*, as Luther so pertinently puts it. Because their faith is grounded on God's clear Word and God's Word rules in their hearts, they are not tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby so many are deceived in these days of strife and dissension. They speak the truth in love when their Roman Catholic neighbors may try to win them for their church because they believe that outside of the Pope's church there is no salvation. In all love Lutheran Christians will show these neighbors how grossly they err and that the one true, saving Church is the Holy Christian Church in which the Savior, Jesus Christ, is the head Bishop. When they are criticized in these unionistic days by their Protestant friends for their strict adherence to God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure and asked to join with them in forming one big united church including all denominations, Lutheran Christians will show these friends how impossible and wrong that would be for them; for they would have to sacrifice clearly revealed truths of Christ's saving Word and thus prove faithless stewards of His sacred trust. They will show these misguided friends that the union among His disciples for which Christ prays His heavenly Father, John 17, 21, consists not in an outward, visible organization, but in the unity of spirit, in the oneness of faith in Him and His revealed Word. Only so long as they continue in Christ's Word are they His disciples indeed. John 8, 31.

O Word of God Incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky;
We praise Thee for the radiance
That from the hallow'd page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.

The Church from her dear Master
Received the gift divine,
And still that light she lifteth
O'er all the earth to shine.
It is the golden casket
Where gems of truth are stored,
It is the heaven-drawn picture
Of Christ, the living Word.

It floateth like a banner
Before God's host unfurled;
It shineth like a beacon
Above the darkling world;
It is the chart and compass
That o'er life's surging sea,
'Mid mists and rocks and quicksands,
Still guides, O Christ, to Thee.

Oh, make Thy Church, dear Savior,
A lamp of burnished gold,
To bear before the nations
Thy true light as of old;
O teach Thy wandering pilgrims
By this their path to trace,
Till, clouds and darkness ended,
They see Thee face to face.

November 3.

A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench. *Is. 42, 3.*

This comforting promise in Isaiah, Matthew cites in the 12th chapter of his gospel. He tells us there, in the 20th verse, how this glorious promise was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, who in His divine compassion went about preaching the Gospel of the kingdom to great multitudes and healing all their sick. Do we not often grow sick at heart when we see how weak we are in faith, and hope, and love, how unworthy, unprofitable our life and conduct must be in His holy sight on account of our many shortcomings and backslidings? Ah, yes, we often resemble such a bruised reed that is entirely worthless, such a smoking flax that no longer sheds any light and ought to be extinguished! But, oh, the adorable gentleness, and forbearance, and saving mercy of our compassionate Redeemer! What sorrowing soul ever came to Him for help and was turned away? The Lord knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. He pities us and loves us just because we are so weak and frail and helpless, even as a kind parent pities and loves his sick, deformed, and suffering child above all else. How tenderly God assures us of His loving-kindness that will not cast us away, but will strengthen our faith and love and kindle them into newer and brighter flame! In all the world there is nothing more weak and helpless than a babe at its mother's breast. Yet our compassionate Lord gives us this assurance: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Let us despair ever and always of our own goodness and worthiness, but never and nowhere let us despair of the saving help and love of our faithful Redeemer.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Come unto Me and rest;
 Lay down, thou weary one, lay
 down
 Thy head upon My breast!"
 I came to Jesus as I was,
 Weary, and worn, and sad;
 I found in Him a resting-place,
 And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 "Behold, I freely give
 The living water; thirsty one,
 Stoop down, and drink, and live!"
 I came to Jesus and I drank
 Of that life-giving stream;
 My thirst was quenched, my soul
 revived,
 And now I live in Him.

November 4.

The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. *John 4, 50.*

Seeing is *not* believing. Seeing trusts in the evidence of the senses, and is often deceived. Faith trusts in the sure and truthful Word of God, and never is deceived. We all too much resemble this nobleman of Capernaum who thought Jesus had to come in person and lay His hand on his sick son in order to heal him. But Jesus chides him for his weak faith, and gives him only the word of promise: "Go thy way; thy son liveth." This word of Jesus so strengthens the weak faith of the nobleman that he returns home, firmly persuaded that it will accomplish what Jesus promised. And his trust in Christ's word did not deceive him. On his return home he hears the joyful news that his dying boy revived and grew well the very hour Jesus had said so. Now he believes with even greater and firmer trust, and brings his whole house to saving faith in Christ. Oh, how joyfully we could go our way through life if we would not look so often for signs of God's favor in happy feelings of our heart or fortunate circumstances of our life, but would simply and solely rely on the sure and infallible Word of our Savior! But our faith grows so lamentably weak when our sins assail us or sorrow and sickness or poverty darken the sky. At such times we crave for a reassuring sign from God, when all the while we have His unfailing promise: "Son, daughter, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." Or: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, and in seven there shall no evil touch thee." We ourselves are often to blame if our faith grows weak and our hearts often are so downcast and unhappy, because we read and meditate so little in the precious Word of our God. Let us learn to cling simply to the blessed Word of Jesus. Then we can also go on our way through life comforted and rejoicing.

Lord, open Thou my heart to hear,
And by Thy Word to me draw near,
Let me Thy Word still pure retain,
Let me Thy child and heir remain.
Thy Word doth move the inmost heart,
Thy Word doth perfect health impart,
Thy Word my soul with joy doth bless,
Thy Word brings peace and blessedness.
Glory to God, the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To Thee, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise throughout eternity!

November 5.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. *Is. 40, 31.*

Strength faithfully to discharge our God-given tasks every day; strength to endure uncomplainingly whatever burden life imposes; strength to suffer the greatest affliction with Christian fortitude; strength, finally, to meet death in the sure hope of heaven — oh, how often our travailing hearts long and sigh for such un-failing, uplifting, victorious strength! Where can we find it? To-day's text tells us: In waiting on the Lord, that is, in putting our trust in Him, setting our hope in His grace and mercy, firmly clinging to His divine promise, and resigning our all to Him. Doing that, we shall prove more than conquerors, for then we know that it is not we with our feeble powers, but almighty and merciful God who rules and governs our life. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. As our days are, so shall our strength be. He will daily renew it and give our soul wings to soar like the eagle above all earthly things, over all the petty trials and wearisome burdens of life. Though deep valleys of grief open before us, though difficulties stretch mountain-high across our path, we pass and surmount them unafraid and unhindered, in the strength of the Lord, in whose omnipotent arm we trust and with whom nothing is impossible. Revived and inspired by His sustaining Word, we can daily run our race and not faint in our walk, knowing that every step brings us nearer home. Then let us not look for strength in our own hearts, nor in our own wisdom and power, but let us learn to wait on the Lord in daily and unquestioning faith. He will do for us what we cannot do, and will bring us safely to His paradise above.

I am trusting Thee to guide me;
Thou alone shalt lead,
Every day and hour supplying
All my need.

I am trusting Thee for power,
Thine can never fail;
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me
Must prevail.

I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall;
I am trusting Thee forever
And for all.

November 6.

Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake and will not remember thy sins.

Is. 43, 24. 25.

These affecting words of our Savior call for our deepest humility and holiest gratitude. Oh, that we might bear these words in mind to-day! That we might write them with indelible letters in our heart of hearts and never, never forget them! Alas, we so often forget our personal share of sin and guilt that caused our Savior such a life of sorrow here on earth, such a death of nameless woe! But speaking through the prophet of old, He reminds us that it was also for your sake and my sake He served, and suffered, and died as the Redeemer of the world. But we have not only our personal share in the common guilt of mankind that cost our Savior His last drop of atoning blood; our personal guilt grows greater when we consider how we have wearied Him with many sins from our youth. How forgetful, how wayward, how rebellious we often proved to His holy Word and wise dispensations! With what *special* care, and patience, and loving-kindness He had to lead and guide us! And though even now we often weary Him with our sinful shortcomings and prove so lukewarm in His love and service, yet He never tires in loving us, but tells us again even to-day that He blots out our manifold transgressions for His own sake and will not remember our sins, will not hold them against us, nor punish us for them, as we so richly deserve. Verily, every one of us is a living monument to the saving mercy of our God; and when by His infinite grace we reach His mansions of glory, His *special* saving providences and mercies toward us will be our grateful song through all eternity.

When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue,
And after death, in distant worlds,
The glorious theme renew.

When nature fails, and day and night
Divide Thy works no more,
My ever grateful heart, O Lord,
Thy mercy shall adore.

Through all eternity to Thee
A joyful song I'll raise:—
But, oh! eternity's too short
To utter all Thy praise.

November 7.

And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." *Luke, 9, 59, 60.*

At first sight it seems very unkind in our Lord not to permit this disciple first to go and bury his father. But we have here a telling illustration of the solemn truth our Savior teaches, Matt. 10, 37: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Neither father nor mother nor the dearest human being can save us from sin and God's eternal wrath. That has been done alone by our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence our duty to Him is paramount to everything else, and we must love Him more even than father or mother. There are others, the spiritually dead, the unbelieving, unconverted children of this world, who can bury their dead, that is to say, regard human customs as more important than the concerns of the spirit. Christ's followers have a more important thing to do. Their supreme duty is to preach the kingdom of God. That is spoken not only of the ordained ministers of the Word, but of all followers of Christ, of all Christians. Jesus wants no hesitating, worldly-minded "grave-diggers" for His disciples, but living witnesses who confess Him and His saving truth by word and deed and thus extend the kingdom of God. They must break with the spiritually dead, with the unbelieving worldlings and their dead works, and unhesitatingly do the will of their Lord at all times, permitting no interference of human ties and human interests. Such are the faithful servants who shall hear their Master say to them on His great day: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25, 21.

O gracious God, in whom I live,
My feeble efforts aid;
Help me to watch and pray and
strive,
Though trembling and afraid.

Increase my faith, increase my hope,
When foes and fears prevail;
And bear my fainting spirit up,
Or soon my strength will fail.

Whene'er temptations fright my
heart,
Or lure my feet aside,
My God, Thy powerful aid impart,
My Guardian and my Guide.

Oh, keep me in Thy heavenly way,
And bid the Tempter flee;
And let me never, never stray
From happiness and Thee.

November 8.

So, likewise, shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. *Matt. 18, 35.*

Our indignation rises at the unmerciful debtor whom his lord forgave his great debt of ten thousand talents and who could prove so cruel toward his fellow-servant, casting him into prison for not being able to pay him the small debt of an hundred pence. But let us beware, lest we cast stones at others while we ourselves are living in glass houses. How very hard we find it to forgive those who injure us in our good name or business! We are so quick to resent any little insult; and some, when grave injustice is done, will not forgive "from their heart," as the Savior here commands us to do, but bear ill will toward the offending brother to their dying day. But woe to him who lives and dies with such an unforgiving spirit toward his fellow-men. He forfeits the forgiveness he once found with God, and is cast into the prison of everlasting torment; for God will say to him: "O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst Me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" *Matt. 18, 32, 33.* Let us never forget how much it cost our Savior to win for us the forgiveness of our sins; and let us always remember that His atoning, precious blood was shed also for our offending brethren. When one of them wrongs us, let us not cast him aside or even meditate revenge, but let us rather go to him, show him his wrong in all loving-kindness, and adjust our differences. If we cannot win the brother, we can still pray for him and practise the holy Christian revenge that fills the angels with joy: heap fiery coals on his head by doing good to him. The God of peace fill us with His Spirit of love and peace that we may not avenge ourselves on our enemies, but be blessed peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. *Matt. 5, 9.*

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
Unite my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there.
Thine wholly, Thine alone I am;
Be Thou alone my constant flame.

O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone;
O may Thy love possess me whole,
My Joy, my Treasure, and my Crown:
Strange flames far from my heart remove;
My every act, word, thought, be love!

November 9.

Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. *Rom. 14, 8.*

We are the Lord's. O blessed, O glorious fact! Is it true? Can we also say with Paul that we are the Lord's? When can we truthfully say so? The answer must be: When we live not for self, not for this world, not in any conscious sin, but give ourselves with our whole heart to Jesus, believing in Him, loving Him and His blessed Gospel, serving Him where we can in His needy brethren, and living in daily prayerful companionship with Him. Then we live *in* and *for* the Lord, and He is with us in all we do, blessing and comforting and saving us to the end. Then shall we also die in the Lord. No matter when, or where, or how death comes to us, be it after a lingering illness or in the twinkling of an eye, be it at home or abroad, while softly pillowed in bed or out on the street, — it will be a blessed death, for it will be a death in the Lord. We fall into His loving hands, from which even death cannot pluck us, but must serve to fulfil also in us the sweet promise: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." *Rev. 14, 13.* In that land of pure delight, where Sabbaths have no end, nor tears, nor toil, nor grievous sin will ever burden us again, oh, there we shall never regret it that here we denied ourselves for Jesus' sake and took up our cross and followed Him. Through endless days we shall rest and sing of the great things redeeming love has done for us. "Look up, ye saints of God! Nor fear to tread below The path your Savior trod Of daily toil and woe. Wait but a little while In uncomplaining love. His own most gracious smile Shall welcome you above."

Jesus! I live to Thee,
The loveliest and best;
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,
In Thy blest love I rest.

Jesus! I die to Thee,
Whenever death shall come;
To die in Thee is life to me
In my eternal home.

Whether to live or die,
I know not which is best;
To live in Thee is bliss to me,
To die is endless rest.

Living or dying, Lord,
I ask but to be Thine;
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,
Make heaven forever mine.

November 10.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. *Rom. 1, 17.*

This is Luther's birthday. He was born in the little Saxon village of Eisleben, in 1483. At his birth, gross popish darkness covered all Christian lands, and would still cover them, if the merciful God had not sent us the blessed light of His saving Gospel again through Luther. It is touching to read how Luther, in his monkish blindness, sought in vain for pardon and peace. All his fasting and all his prayers to the saints, his vigils and mortifications availed him nothing. Only after God in His mercy had opened Luther's eyes to the central truth of the Gospel, namely, that the penitent sinner is forgiven alone by grace through faith in the all-sufficient merit of Christ, — only then did he find peace of soul. When that divine truth of *salvation by free grace* dawned in his agonizing heart, he thought the very doors of paradise had opened to receive him, and his joy and gratitude to his God and Savior knew no bounds. We know how courageously he battled for that Gospel-truth all his life, and how in the hour of death he fell peacefully asleep, confessing it to his last breath. Millions in his day hailed the restored Gospel-light with rapturous joy; many suffered persecution, even death, rather than deny it. But let us look at the so-called Christian lands to-day. What is their religious and social condition after four hundred years of restored Gospel-light? Roman Catholic countries still refuse to accept it, and in Protestant countries millions are ashamed to own it, and give themselves up to unbelief and outspoken enmity against it. What is the consequence? Where the converting and sanctifying influence of the Gospel dies out among a people, their social and political corruption gain the upper hand, and society falls a helpless prey to the eagles of destruction. Oh, that we all who bear Luther's name might follow his inspiring example, and never grow ashamed of the Gospel, come what may! Then will the blessed Word of Christ prove also our salvation in this world and in the world to come.

Ashamed of Thee! O dearest Lord,
I marvel how such wrong can be;
And yet how oft in deed and word
Have I been found ashamed of Thee!

Ashamed of Thee! O Lord, I pray
This cruel wrong no more may be;
And in Thy last great Advent day,
Oh, be not Thou ashamed of me!

November 11.

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you. 1 Pet. 1, 24. 25.

Here the inspired apostle first rings the funeral knell that consigns all human wisdom, power, and glory to the grave. Sin-born man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity. Though he flourish mightily for a while and proudly boast of his great achievements, as did Nebuchadnezzar, he finally withers and dies, even as the short-lived grass and its fast-fading flower. "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" is written in indelible letters on the handiwork of man. There are no "Immortals" among the sons of clay. — Ah, how this transitory glory of all earthly things, of their own life, and their most cherished ambition fills the carnal-minded children of this world with black gloom and despair! Listen to one of their poets sighing while in the very prime of life: "My days are in the yellow leaf; The flowers and fruits of love are gone; The worm, the canker, and the grief Are mine alone." (Verses written by Lord Byron on his thirty-seventh birthday.) But is there nothing in this world of universal death and decay that can satisfy the longing for immortality which God Himself has planted in the heart of man? O wanderer to the tomb, there is! Listen to the jubilant note St. Peter rings out in the second part of our passage: "But the Word of the Lord endureth forever." That Word is not subject to change and decay, but victoriously survives all the wrecks of time. Do you ask: Where can I find that Word of the Lord? Why, it is no hidden secret known only to a few, no book sealed with seven seals, impossible for you to comprehend and make its saving truth your own. "This is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you," says the apostle. It is the old, old Bible, the word of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being its Beginning and its End. Whosoever puts his trust in that blessed Word shall never be deceived, but will find in it life and immortality; for Christ says: "If a man keep My saying, he shall never see death."

O grant that in Thy holy Word
We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here,
Receive us into glory there.

November 12.

Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's. *Matt. 22, 21.*

Foremost among the many temporal blessings which our merciful God showered on the world in the Reformation we must prize the separation of Church and State and the resulting restoration to the civil powers of their God-given honor and authority. In the words just read our Lord makes it the duty of every man to honor both God and the civil government, rendering to each what is their due. But before the rise of the Reformation, the Pope claimed to be the sole possessor of both powers, of the powers of Church as well as of State. Kings and civil magistrates were held to be his vassals whom he could depose from office at pleasure if they refused to obey his mandates. What terrible wars resulted from this arrogance of the Pope the history of the Middle Ages tells us. From the Bible Luther taught the Christian world God's clear and holy will regarding this vital question, too; and our forefathers boldly defend civil government in Article 16 of our *Augsburg Confession as an ordinance of God*, teaching that "Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates and laws, save only when they command to do any sin; for then they ought to obey God rather than men. Acts 5, 29." The separation of Church and State which we enjoy in this country is the very bedrock of our American liberty and independence. But it cannot be denied that lawlessness and dangerous anarchism is spreading about us on all sides. Why is this? Because the fear of God and obedience to His holy Law to such a large extent has vanished in our country. Our sacred religious liberty, as well as our civil liberty and peace are threatened in these evil days because so many of our American people no longer believe in and uphold the Biblical doctrine of the separation of Church and State. We need to pray for our government, therefore, every day.

O merciful Father in heaven, who holdest in Thy hand all the might of man, and who hast ordained the powers that be for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well, and of whom is all rule and authority in the kingdoms of the world: we humbly beseech Thee, graciously regard Thy servants, the President of the United States, the Governor of this Commonwealth, our Judges and Magistrates, and all the rulers of the earth. May all that receive the sword, as Thy ministers, bear it according to Thy commandment. Enlighten and defend them by Thy name, O God. Grant them wisdom and understanding, that under their peaceable governance Thy people may be guarded and directed in righteousness, quietness, and unity, and that we, with them, may show forth the praise of Thy name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

November 13.

Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. *Is. 46, 4.*

Old age has its own infirmities and dangers, even as childhood and youth. But it also has the most comforting promises of God, if it be a *pious* old age. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord," says Psalm 92, "shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright." Here in the text from Isaiah God gives pious old age the reassuring promise that He Himself will carry His aging children in His sheltering arms to the end. Trusting in these divine promises, old age in the Christian resembles the golden fall of the year, when mellow sunshine glorifies the woods and fields, and there breathes a spirit of peace, of dreamy stillness all about one. Oh, what a blessing pious old fathers and mothers prove to their family circle, to all their acquaintances! They have experienced the patience, and mercy, and faithfulness of our God from their youth through all their long and eventful years, and can advise, and counsel, and comfort their children and friends in all their troubles and sorrows, pointing them always to our God, from whom cometh our help, and praying for their loved ones and for their Savior's kingdom as long as their dear old lips can move. Blessed the home that has such an old, praying father or mother to shelter and to cherish! How children and grandchildren will lovingly care for them and patiently bear with their increasing infirmities, remembering the divine promises: "Honor thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6), and: "To requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God." 1 Tim. 5, 4.

One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er:
Nearer my home, to-day, am I
Than e'er I've been before.

Nearer my Father's house,
Where many mansions be;
Nearer to-day the great white
throne,
Nearer the crystal sea.

Nearer the bound of life
Where burdens are laid down;
Nearer to leave the heavy cross,
Nearer to gain the crown.

But, lying dark between,
Winding down through the night,
There rolls the silent, unknown
stream

That leads at last to light.

E'en now, perchance, my feet
Are slipping on the brink,
And I, today, am nearer home,—
Nearer than now I think.

Father, perfect my trust;
Strengthen my spirit's faith;
Nor let me stand, at last, alone
Upon the shore of death.

November 14.

And as he [Paul] reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Acts 24, 25.

A minister of the Gospel determined on one occasion to preach on the text: "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." While in his study, meditating, he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was carried into hell and set down in the midst of the lost spirits. They were assembled to devise means whereby they might ruin the souls of men. One rose, and said: "I will go to the earth and tell men that the Bible is all a fable, that it is not *divinely* appointed of God." No, that would not do. Another said: "Let me go; I will tell men that there is no God, no Savior, no heaven, no hell"; and at the last words a fiendish smile lighted upon the countenance of all. But, "No, that will not do," said they at last; "we cannot make men believe that." Suddenly one arose and with a wise mien, like the Serpent of old, suggested: "No; I will journey to the world of men, and will tell them that there *is* a God, that there *is* a Savior, that there *is* a heaven — yes, and a hell, too. But I will tell them *there is no hurry; to-morrow* will do." And they sent him. — This is the story. And its application? We see it in the case of Felix, the Roman governor. Felix put off his conversion to a "convenient season," which never came. He perished miserably in his unforgiven sins. So many, especially among the young people, follow his dangerous example. God's saving Word is preached to them and makes a deep impression on their conscience. They feel that they ought to give themselves to Christ and become consistent Christians. But they cannot give up their love for the world or their pet sins; and so they delay, thinking that when they are grown old and have enjoyed life, they will turn to their Savior. O poor deluded dupes of Satan! The convenient season never comes for them; and if God does not rescue them as a brand from the burning, they are lost forever. No man has the "morrow" nor the convenient season for his conversion in his hands. Therefore when God calls us in His Word, let us obey His voice at once. To-morrow it may be *too late*.

Just as I am, and *waiting not*
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

November 15.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." *Acts 26, 28.*

Almost saved is altogether lost. This King Agrippa was a Jew, a son of Abraham, well versed in Moses and the Prophets, and knew of the Hope of Israel, of the promised Messiah. Yet when Paul preaches to him with convincing power the Hope of Israel, the crucified and risen Savior, he refuses to give himself to Christ, refuses to become a Christian, and so loses in the end not only his earthly crown, but also the crown of everlasting life. Agrippa has many followers among the nominal Christians who are brought up in God's Word, have a good intellectual knowledge of the way of salvation, but — *never go that way*. They cannot break the last chain that binds them to the world, its pleasures, its society, or whatever the hindrance may be that prevents them from becoming sincere and whole-hearted Christians. And so they are entirely lost; for our Savior says: "He that is not *with Me* is *against Me*; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." Matt. 12, 30. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7, 21. Oh, the sad, sad fate that awaits so many who sit at the King's table spread before them, but who never taste of its heavenly bliss, because they refuse to repent and believe! Let us take warning and permit nothing to stand between us and our Savior.

"Almost persuaded" now to believe;
 "Almost persuaded" Christ to receive;
 Seems now some soul to say,
 "Go, Spirit, go Thy way;
 Some more convenient day
 On Thee I'll call."

"Almost persuaded," come, come to-day;
 "Almost persuaded," turn not away;
 Jesus invites you here,
 Angels are lingering near,
 Prayers rise from hearts so dear:
 O wanderer, come!

"Almost persuaded," harvest is past!
 "Almost persuaded," doom comes at last!
 "Almost" cannot avail;
 "Almost" is but to fail!
 Sad, sad the bitter wail —
 "Almost — BUT — LOST!"

November 16.

And they laughed Him to scorn. *Matt. 9, 24.*

They that laugh last laugh best. When Jesus said of the dead daughter of Jairus: "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," the people in the house laughed at Him. They did not know Jesus nor His divine power over death. But their mockery soon turns to amazement when He restores the dead girl to life and proves before their astonished eyes that in His presence the dead are but like those that sleep. There are unbelievers to-day who delight in ridiculing our Christian faith in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. But let them mock and jeer as much as they please, they shall not rob us for a moment of the sweet comfort that we have in our Lord Jesus, the almighty and merciful Conqueror of death and the grave, of the comfort that our departed loved ones are but asleep in Him. Though He does not give them back to us in this world, as He gave back to Jairus his child (and who would want his dear ones who have fallen asleep in the Lord back again in this evil world of sin and sorrow?), yet we know that in His own good time He will also reunite us with our loved ones before His throne, never to be parted any more. Though to our grieving and yearning hearts the time seem ever so long till we see our loved ones again, we remember that a thousand years with our Lord are but as yesterday. His promise to His weeping disciples: "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you," did not fail in the days of His flesh, and it will not fail us now. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." *Is. 35, 10.* When that blessed consummation arrives, we shall see who will laugh then — the mocking infidel or the humble believer in the crucified and risen Jesus.

Safely, safely gathered in,
Far from sorrow, far from sin,
No more childish griefs or fears,
No more sadness, no more tears;
For the life so young and fair
Now hath passed from earthly care;
God Himself the soul will keep,
Giving His beloved sleep.

Safely, safely gathered in,
Far from sorrow, far from sin;
Passed beyond all grief and pain,
Death for thee is truest gain;

For our loss we may not weep,
Nor our loved one long to keep
From the home of rest and peace,
Where all sin and sorrow cease.

Safely, safely gathered in,
Far from sorrow, far from sin;
God has saved from weary strife,
In its dawn, this fresh young life;
Now it waits for us above,
Resting in the Savior's love.
Jesus, grant that we may meet
There, adoring at Thy feet.

November 17.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. *Matt. 10, 29—31.*

Evil days are upon us, and their gloomy aspect often fills us with alarm. Yet we have no cause for despondency and fear. Wiser and mightier hands than ours are shaping the destinies of the world and ruling all events in our personal life. That blessed Lord, whose we are, whose sovereign will reigns supreme in heaven and on earth, comes to us, His believing children, in these words of our Savior, and tells us not to fear; for He marks every sparrow's fall and has numbered all the hairs of our head. So great and painstaking is His loving providence with us! Nothing, then, happens to us or to the world just by chance or by some relentless natural law. All things are ruled by the will of our Father who is in heaven. We can cheerfully trust the great world and our little selves to Him. We, His redeemed children, are far more valuable in His all-seeing and loving eyes than are many sparrows. Yet can the sparrows who neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns teach us a very wholesome lesson when we remember that our heavenly Father feedeth them. *Matt. 6, 26.* A little bird alighted at sunset on the bough of a pear-tree that grew in Luther's garden. Luther looked upon it, and said, "That little bird covers its head with its wings and will sleep there so still and fearless, though over it are the infinite starry spaces and the great blue depths of immensity. Yet it fears not; it is at home. The God that made it, too, is *there*." Aye, wherever we are, God is there to provide for us and protect us. That is the lesson we can learn from the birds. Let us not forget these little preachers of God's kind providence in these cold winter-months, but throw them a few daily crumbs and remember the sacred truth the Lord Jesus points from their example.

O Savior! I hear Thy voice
In the happy birds of the air,
Who sow not, gather, nor reap,
Yet lack not a Father's care.
They trust to a guiding hand
Which feedeth them day by day;
What want they with storehouse or barn?
And are we not better than they?

November 18.

He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. *Phil. 1, 6.*

God be praised through all eternity for the blessed truth contained in our text! In the preceding verse Paul fervently thanks God for having brought the Philippians to their fellowship in the Gospel. That is the good work which God has begun in us also. From pure grace, for the sake of His dear Son Jesus Christ, without seeing any merit or worthiness in us, God has brought us to faith in Jesus, our Savior. And oh, how blessed, how happy it makes us to know that in Jesus we have forgiveness of all our sins and are God's dear children who in all their troubles can go to Him with the sweet prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven, pardon and help us for Jesus' sake!" But shall we remain God's beloved children and abide in true, saving faith unto our end? Does not that dark question often perplex us? Indeed, we should have to despair if our preservation in faith and our final salvation rested but for a moment in our own weak hands. Our hearts are so fickle and depraved, the wicked world so alluring, Satan so subtle and mighty with his temptations that not one of us would or could remain in the fellowship of Christ's saving Gospel if the Spirit of God did not preserve us in the true faith. But the very fact that God has begun His good work in us proves beyond all doubt that it is His good and gracious will to save us to the end. Men may bungle their work, God never. In Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Our salvation rests secure in His merciful hands. But does this doctrine not beget all manner of carnal security in the Christian's heart? Nevermore! On the contrary, it serves to humble the Christian and to keep him from presumptuous sinning; for he knows that God will perform His work in him only in and through the Gospel that leads us in the way of repentance and faith and holiness. Only he who walks in that order of salvation is a child of God and can exult with the pious hymn-writer: —

Through Jesus' bloody merit
I am at peace with God;
What, then, can daunt my spirit,
However dark my road?
My courage shall not fail me,
For God is on my side;
Though hell itself assail me,
Its rage I may deride.

There's nothing that can sever
Me from the love of God;
No want, no pain whatever,
No famine, peril, blood.
Though thousand foes surround me,
And in their base design
A sheep for slaughter count me,
The victory still is mine.

November 19.

When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. *Luke 22, 32.*

Peter did not forget this solemn reminder of his Savior. We can still read in the Acts of the Apostles and the two epistles of Peter how he extolled the mercy and faithfulness of his Lord after his conversion and thus strengthened his brethren in their faith. By faith, by faith in Christ alone, is the sinner turned from sin and death to life and salvation. It is alone the Gospel of Christ that kindles appropriating faith of Jesus' saving merit in man's heart and thus converts and saves him. Peter had the power to deny his Savior and fall from grace. But it was Christ's look, Christ's word alone, that rekindled saving faith in him. Every true Christian has felt this converting power of Christ's Gospel in his heart and life. He declares with grateful voice: "It is Thy work alone, That now I am converted, Thy power o'er Satan's work In me Thou hast asserted; Thy mercy, that doth reach Unto the clouds, O Lord, Did break my stony heart By Thine own mighty Word." But to every converted Christian the Lord now says: "Strengthen thy brethren!" It is not only the pastor's duty to warn the sinner, to point the penitent to their Savior, to comfort the sorrowful, in a word, to be a witness of Christ, but that is the sacred duty of every church-member, of every Christian. Whenever he sees his fellow-men, and especially his brethren of the faith, in trouble about their souls, he should strengthen and comfort them by speaking to them of their Savior and His matchless, faithful love that will reject no one that comes to Him in his sins or affliction. May that spirit dwell in us which dwelt in Peter and John who declared to the forbidding priests of Jerusalem: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4, 20.

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

November 20.

For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. *Matt. 24, 24.*

In this 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The last days of the wicked and doomed city of the Jews are typical of the last days of this doomed and wicked world. There were false prophets during the siege of Jerusalem, who misled the people and stiffened them in their rebellion against the Romans by declaring that God would never permit His holy city and Temple to fall into the hands of the heathen, but would save His Sanctuary in the last moment by a great and mighty miracle. Is not our present time filled with such false prophets who laugh and mock at the clear prophecy of our Savior concerning the end of the world, and thereby harden the hearts of thousands against Christ's converting and saving Gospel? Again, there were false Christs at the time of Jerusalem's destruction who claimed to be the promised Messiah and caused their adherents to perish miserably by their fanaticism. Do we not hear and read of such fanatical spirits in our time who brazenly claim to be a reincarnation of Christ and who mislead their blind followers into all kinds of superstition and odious vice? Think of the lying signs and wonders which these false Christs and prophets, for instance, the so-called Christian Scientists, perform also in our days. And yet men will live on in blind security and never think of fleeing from the wrath to come, though sign after sign is being fulfilled, proclaiming that the Judge is at the door. Great is our danger of being infected with this wide-spread carnal security. Therefore let us take the warning of our Savior to heart. "Behold, I have told you before," He says to His disciples. And they heeded His warning, and fled from Jerusalem during the armistice granted by the Romans. So let us daily flee this wicked world by abiding in true repentance and true belief in our Lord Jesus, who will also shorten the dangerous days of this perishing world in order to save His redeemed and believing children.

Great God, what do I see and hear?
The end of things created!
The Judge of man I see appear,
On clouds of glory seated.
The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
The dead which they contained before;
Prepare, my soul, to meet Him.

November 21.

But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. *Jas. 1, 22.*

“The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” 1 Cor. 4, 20. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” 1 Cor. 2, 9. That is written not primarily of the Christian’s bliss in heaven, but of the great and holy joy that becomes his in his conversion to Christ. But so many never taste and see how good the Lord is; and why not? Because they are not doers of His Word. They may be hearers, regular hearers of the Word. But they never do what they hear. With them the saving call goes into one ear and out at the other. But what good is it for a man to hear God’s Word telling him to repent, if he remains in his love and service of sin? What good for him to be told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, if he still trusts in his own goodness and virtue? What good for so many hearers of the Word to be told to forgive their enemies, if they will not forgive; to pray, and they never utter a heartfelt prayer; to strive after holiness, and they never think of crucifying their flesh and the lusts thereof? Oh, terrible self-deception in which such hearers live who are not doers of the Word! Things will happen just as our Savior says, Luke 17: “There shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.” Why? Because the one was no doer of the Word, while the other was. “Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” Why? Because the one was no doer of the Word of her Savior, while the other was. We are all hearers of the saving Word of our God. Oh, let us daily and earnestly beseech our Savior to grant us His Holy Spirit that we may be doers of His Word, and not idle hearers, lest we deceive ourselves.

Almighty Father, bless the word
Which through Thy grace we now have heard;
O may the precious seed take root,
Spring up, and bear abundant fruit.

November 22.

And Jesus answered and said unto her: “**Martha, Martha,** thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and **Mary** hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” *Luke 10, 41. 42.*

In order to be faithful doers of the Word of God, it is above all things necessary that we prove faithful and attentive hearers of Jesus’ saving Truth. Faith, living, active faith, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Therefore let us always take time to hear and learn the blessed Word of God. Let us not make the mistake Martha here makes and so many make with her: when Jesus comes to them to teach them His Gospel, they can find no time to listen and learn. Day by day they are so busy with their household cares or business affairs that they cannot even find five minutes to spend with their Bible. And on Sundays they have so much to keep them from church, or, when in church, their minds are so wrapt up with worldly things that in their case Jesus is talking to deaf ears. How much more blessed is Mary and all who follow her example and take time to sit down at Jesus’ feet to listen to His instruction! They have chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from them; even death cannot rob them of the salvation they find in Jesus and His saving Word, while all the treasures and pleasures which other people acquire with so much care and trouble in this world vanish like smoke. “But one thing is needful!” That is our soul’s salvation. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? But salvation we can find only in Jesus and His quickening Word. Let nothing, therefore, keep us from hearing and learning that Word. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.

How were Mary’s thoughts devoted
Her eternal joy to find,
As intent each word she noted,
At her Savior’s feet reclined!
How kindled her heart, how devout was its feeling,
While hearing the lessons that Christ was revealing!
For Jesus all earthly concerns she forgot,
And all was repaid in that one happy lot.

Thus my longings, heavenward tending,
Jesus, rest alone on Thee;
Help me, thus on Thee depending,
Savior, come and dwell in me!
Although all the world should forsake and forget Thee,
In love I will follow Thee, ne’er will I quit Thee;
Lord Jesus, both spirit and life is Thy Word;
And is there a joy which Thou dost not afford?

November 23.

Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. *Luke 10, 20.*

Our Lord had sent seventy of His disciples out to preach the Gospel and had given them power to heal the sick and drive out the unclean spirits. They returned again to Him with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name." Then the Lord tells them what our text reports. Yes, there can be no greater joy, even for a mighty apostle, than to know that his name is written in heaven. All other joy in this world is but a passing dream and shadow. "The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, Await alike the inevitable hour; The paths of glory lead but to the grave." But to know yourself a pardoned and beloved child of God, with your name written in the book of life, that is joy, that is glory that never passes away and survives even death and the grave. The poorest pauper in our almshouses can possess this joy, and it will make him inexpressibly rich. The greatest sufferer in our hospitals can find heavenly peace and comfort in it. With that joy in his heart, the dying Christian can meet death with a smile, and the penitent, but pardoned sinner can rejoice: "Naught, naught can e'er condemn me, Nor set my hope aside; Now hell no more can claim me, Its fury I deride. No sentence e'er reproves me, No ill destroys my peace, For Christ, my Savior, loves me And screens me with His grace." In all the trials and burdens of this sorrowful world the weary, homesick child of God can sing: "My heart for joy is springing And can no more be sad, 'Tis full of mirth and singing, Sees naught but sunshine glad: The Sun that cheers my spirit Is Jesus Christ, my King, That which I shall inherit Hereafter, makes me sing." Are our names written in heaven? Yes, if we truly believe in Jesus, our Savior. For whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

Farewell! I say with gladness,
False, evil world, farewell!
Thy life is sin and sadness,
With thee I would not dwell;
In heaven are better pleasures,
I long for that bright sphere
Where God grants endless treasures
To those that served Him here.

O write my name, I pray Thee,
Now in the book of life;
So let me here obey Thee,
And there, where joys are rife,
Forever bloom before Thee,
Thy perfect freedom prove,
And tell, as I adore Thee,
How faithful was Thy love.

November 24.

These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. *Matt. 25, 46.*

“There is no hell, no place of everlasting punishment.” That is the settled conviction of many so-called Christians in these last days. They are like the rich citizen of Holland who was a great feaster and one day sat down to table, but unwittingly placed his chair too near the blazing hearth. When a companion wanted to warn him that his coat was catching fire, he told him to keep quiet. Finally, made aware of the injury, he began to scold that he was not told before! Many a man is like that rich glutton. Given to his carnal pleasure, he will not be disturbed with thoughts of the hereafter. He grows angry when he is reminded of the danger of his soul and warned against the wrath to come. Finally, when it is too late, in the hour of death, even on Judgment Day, when the fires of wrath begin to burn in his terrified conscience, he will accuse other people, even God Himself, that they did not warn him in time, when in fact he has been warned, warned so earnestly and lovingly by his Savior in God’s Word. But he would not heed the warning. His selfish, carnal life proves that there was no saving faith in him, the faith which worketh by love. So his condemnation is just. The fires of everlasting punishment were not prepared for him nor any other human soul. They were prepared for the devil and his angels. If with his sinful life he was a servant of the devil, he must share his master’s abode throughout eternity, must suffer with him the torments of everlasting punishment. The wide-spread belief that there is no hell is so pleasing also to our depraved and carnal hearts. Let us, therefore, earnestly watch and pray against this satanic delusion and by the grace of God abide in the faith and love of our Savior, then shall we be among the righteous that inherit life eternal.

And will the Judge descend?
And must the dead arise?
And not a single soul escape
His all-discerning eyes?

How will my heart endure
The terrors of that day,
When earth and heaven before
His face
Astonished shrink away?

FAMILY ALTAR.

But ere that trumpet shakes
The mansions of the dead,
Hark, from the Gospel’s cheering
sound
What joyful tidings spread!

Ye sinners, seek His grace
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross
And find salvation there.

November 25.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. *John 3, 14. 15.*

It is a solemn truth that God often punishes sin with sin. When men harden their hearts in sin and refuse to heed God's call to repentance, God will give them over to greater and viler sins, until they destroy themselves by their impenitence and persistent sinning. Let us, therefore, anxiously avoid forging the first link in the chain, committing the first wilful sin that may prove our destruction. When in the weakness of our flesh we have given way to sin, let us at once, in true repentance, seek forgiveness with God through our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. For in Him — O blessed truth! — God has also punished sin with sin and freed us from its guilt and power. As Israel in the wilderness, so are we all bitten by a poisonous snake, by the serpent of sin. Its deadly virus has vitiated all powers of soul and body; and we in ourselves know no remedy against it. But God, in His wonderful mercy, punished sin with sin when He sent forth His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Rom. 8, 3. Look to the cross on Calvary! On it hangs Jesus, God's own Son, nailed there by the sins of the Jews and Gentiles, by your sins and mine; for the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And now the blessed truth holds good which Jesus announces in our text. Whoever among the bitten Jews in the wilderness looked up to the brazen serpent, believing the promise which God gave through Moses in connection with it, was saved. So if we look up in faith to our crucified Redeemer, we shall not perish in our sins, but find forgiveness, life, and salvation. May the blessed cross of Jesus always prove our saving refuge in this wilderness of sin, and sorrow, and death!

Enslaved by sin, and bound in chains,
Beneath its dreadful tyrant sway,
And doomed to everlasting pains,
We wretched, guilty captives lay.

Nor gold nor gems could buy our peace,
Nor the whole world's collected store
Suffice to purchase our release;
A thousand worlds were all too poor.

Jesus, the Lord, the mighty God,
An all-sufficient ransom paid:
O matchless price! His precious blood
For vile, rebellious traitors shed.

November 26.

I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.

Phil. 4, 13.

Happy the man who can make this triumphant declaration of Paul his own. We know it is gloriously true from the lips of the apostle. No other man labored more, suffered more, and achieved more for the Master than did Paul. He became all things to all men that he might win souls for Christ. Hence he writes in the verses preceding our text: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer." And now he tells us the secret of his marvelous courage and success. It was not his own wisdom, or learning, or strength of character, but Christ, for whom and in whom he lived. In the power of his crucified and risen Lord he victoriously overcame all difficulties, courageously suffered all want, even imprisonment, and finally a martyr's death. Paul's Savior is our Savior. Let us learn with Paul to live *in* Him and *for* Him who died for us that we might live, live forever. Looking up daily in prayerful faith to our ascended and glorified Redeemer with whom nothing is impossible, we also shall be able to say in all our trials and afflictions: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." In our deepest woe, when the waters of tribulation go over us and threaten to engulf us, we shall be lifted up and marvelously sustained by the never-failing power of our almighty and merciful Savior. Let us make Him the joy and strength of our heart to-day, and whatever its labors or trials may be, it will prove a *perfect* day indeed.

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
Triumph o'er the shades of night!
Day-spring from on high, be near!
Day-star, in my heart appear!

Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by Thee;
Joyless is the day's return,
Till Thy mercy's beams I see;
Till they inward light impart,
Cheer my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit, then, this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief!
Fill me, Radiancy divine,
Scatter all my unbelief!
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day.

November 27.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. *Prov. 4, 23.*

Men are very anxious to keep the money they must earn by their daily toil and labor. Others take great care to keep in good health. In short, whatever men value highly they also try to keep in their possession and guard against loss. So the Christian, the child of God, should keep his heart with all diligence and guard against losing his immortal soul. Every other loss can be replaced or at least put up with, but to lose your soul means to be lost forever. Out of the heart are the issues of life, but out of the heart are also the issues of death; for our Lord Jesus tells us that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These evil thoughts defile and condemn man if God's Holy Spirit does not cleanse his heart by faith in the Savior. Where that is done, it is the converted sinner's sacred duty to fight against the sinful lusts of his heart and thus keep it with all diligence. The state and condition of his heart will decide his fate in time and eternity. Then let us keep our heart with all diligence, watching over it when in company or when alone, when at home or abroad. Let us watch it in days of prosperity that it grow not vain and forget God. Let us watch it in days of adversity that it despair not and fall not from saving faith. Let us keep it when praying or attending church; for nothing is so sacred but that sin in us can soil and desecrate it. Let us make repentant David's prayer our daily, fervent request at the throne of grace. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit." The truest, holiest heart that ever beat broke in love for us on the cross to win our hearts for God. Shall we not, then, give our hearts to Him, our blessed Savior, and for His sake keep them with all diligence that He may dwell in them forevermore?

Thee will I love, my Life, my Savior,
Who art my best and truest Friend;
Thee will I love and praise forever,
For never shall Thy kindness end;
Thee will I love with all my heart,
For Thou my Bridegroom art.

November 28.

They that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. *Matt. 25, 10.*

Are we ready to meet the Bridegroom, our dear Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes to judge the world and to take His waiting bride home to everlasting glory? Now He tarries with His coming, waiting for the last sinner to be converted and saved. But He will come suddenly, at an hour no one expects; and then only they who are ready with their burning lamps can enter the bridal chamber of heaven. Who are they? The wise virgins, that is, the Christians who did not give way to carnal security while the Bridegroom tarried, but watched, and prayed, and faithfully used God's saving means of grace. Through the means of grace God's Holy Spirit kept the lamp of faith burning in their hearts, and so they are ready to meet their Lord, whether He come at the midnight hour of death or at the unforeseen hour of the Last Judgment. "And the door was shut," says our text. After the Lord has come to us, be it in death, be it on Judgment Day, there is no more chance of being saved. The Lord will say to them that were not prepared to meet Him: "I know you not!" Then it will be too late, forever too late, to gain heaven by repentance and faith. The time to do so is now, in this world, in this life. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Who idles and sleeps away these his *only* days of grace has himself to blame if he is forever debarred from heaven's happiness and cast into outer darkness where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Then let us redeem these precious days by making our calling and election sure in watching and praying and "not grieving the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed unto the day of our redemption." Walking in the Spirit, who alone can keep us in saving faith, we shall be at all times ready to meet the Bridegroom of our soul. And, oh, what happiness that will be!

Wake, awake, for night is flying,
The watchmen on the heights are crying:
Awake, Jerusalem, arise!
Midnight hears the welcome voices,
And at the thrilling cry rejoices;
O where are ye, ye virgins wise?
The Bridegroom comes, awake!
Your lamps with gladness take!
Hallelujah!
With bridal care yourselves prepare
To meet the Bridegroom, who is near!

November 29.

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Rev. 7, 14.

The seer John here for a moment lifts the curtain that veils the inner sanctuary of heaven from our mortal eyes, and gives us a glimpse of the saints in glory. He tells us how and why they attained everlasting bliss in the presence of God and all His holy angels. They owe their happiness to no work, no virtue, no sacrifice of their own, but to the atoning blood of the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom not only the saints of the New Testament, but also Abraham, Moses, all the prophets and saints of the Old Testament were saved. By nature they were sinners, too, like the rest of men. But they repented and put their trust in Jesus and His precious blood. That made them saints in the sight of God; for in the pardoning and sanctifying blood of the Lamb of God they lost all their guilty stains and were made whiter than snow. In the power of that precious blood they withstood all temptations, endured the greatest tribulations, proved faithful unto death, and were crowned by God with the crown of everlasting life. And, oh, how great is now their bliss through all eternity! "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Where shall we spend eternity? Shall we be numbered among these blessed saints when we depart this evil world? Yes, if by the grace of God we accept and retain the wedding garment of faith in Jesus which He offers us also as a free gift of His saving love in His holy Gospel. Clad in the righteousness of Christ alone, we shall be found worthy to sit at the marriage feast of the Lamb and to sing with all the rejoicing saints: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Amen."

O worthy Judge eternal!
When Thou dost bid us come,
Then open wide the gates of pearl,
And call Thy servants home.

November 30.

I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord"; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. *Selah. Ps. 32, 5.*

We have reached the end of another church-year and with it the end of another year of grace. Who knows whether we shall live through the approaching year and not be with those that sleep beneath the sod? Of this year we can say that our faithful God and Savior came to us day after day with His saving grace, seeking to bless us. He was with us in our daily trials and labors, and though perhaps we had to walk through dark valleys, His sustaining strength and soul-reviving comfort never failed us. What use have we made of the divine blessings which He showered on us in this closing church-year? Have we grown in saving faith and knowledge of His converting and sanctifying Word? Has our love to Him become deeper and firmer? Have we proved more faithful and attentive hearers of His Gospel, have we partaken oftener of His blessed Supper, have we been more instant in prayer, more zealous in every good work? We all, no doubt, shall find many sins of omission and commission to confess to the Lord, as we review our life and Christian conduct during this closing year, perhaps our last year of grace. Then let us bow our knees at the throne of divine mercy and implore forgiveness for our many sins. If we confess them with a humble and contrite heart, as David does in our text, our merciful God and Savior will forgive them and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Blessed shall we be if we close this year knowing that all our sins are forgiven through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With what glad and grateful hearts will we welcome Him when we hear the joyous Advent-message: "Behold, thy King cometh unto *thee!*"

With broken heart and contrite sigh,
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry;
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free;
O God, be merciful to me!

I smite upon my troubled breast,
With deep and conscious guilt oppressed;
Christ and His cross my only plea;
O God, be merciful to me!

Nor alms, nor deeds that I have done
Can for a single sin atone!
To Calvary alone I flee;
O God, be merciful to me!

December 1.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest! *Matt. 21, 9.*

“Rejoice, daughter of Zion! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee!” Again we hear the glad Advent-message and read how the King of mercy and of truth, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, fulfils the age-old prophecy with His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and how the rejoicing multitudes welcome Him as their King with loud acclaim. “Hosanna,” they cry, that is, “Save now, O Lord! Send now prosperity!” And the Lord God did send prosperity. David’s Son, yet greater Lord, finishes victoriously His divine work of redemption and forever sets His captive and mourning people free from their cruel enemies — Satan, sin, and death. Now at His saving name every knee must bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. We have also vowed allegiance to Him, our only King and Savior, in life, in death, through all eternity. But, alas, we must all confess with deep contrition that we have been most neglectful in our homage ever so often. We need pardon for our sin, more faith, more love, more hope, more devotion in His sacred service. And now the glad Advent-message tells us that “He comes the broken heart to bind, The bleeding soul to cure, And with the treasures of His grace To enrich the humble poor.” Should we not sing our glad hosannas to such a faithful and unwearied Savior?

O Thou blessed King of saving grace and mercy, Lord Jesus Christ, Thou only Savior, we pray Thee, come to us with Thy saving Gospel also in this new church-year. Come to our hearts and cleanse them from sin; come to our homes and make them Thy abode; come to our churches and ever sanctify them as temples of Thy great and rich salvation.

Hark the glad sound; the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev’ry heart prepare a throne
And ev’ry voice a song.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim;
And heaven’s eternal arches ring
With Thy beloved name. Amen.

December 2.

I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord. *Gen. 49, 18.*

Jacob, the pious patriarch and forefather of Christ, is about to die. His long and weary pilgrimage through this thorn-infested earth is at an end. Gathering His weeping children at his bedside, he gives them his last blessing and goes home to his God with the precious name of his Redeemer on his paling lips.

"I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." Is not this dying prayer of Jacob the longing confession of every true child of God, and, God grant it, also our heart's desire? We are all God's children by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In our baptism the merciful and loving God met us as He met Jacob at Bethel, and revealed and confirmed also to us His everlasting *covenant-grace*. Now His Holy Spirit dwells within us, and though we often do not think of it, yet deep in our heart there lives the burning desire for *visible* communion with our God. We are strangers and pilgrims in this world and must often confess with the old patriarch: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." When oppressed by long and sore affliction, we cry out with David: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" But like Jacob we walk by faith and not by sight, and must learn to *wait* for the Lord's salvation. A Christian, says a pious old proverb, is a man that can wait. Then let us diligently make use of the Advent days to strengthen our faith and hope in our Redeemer. Let us cheer and comfort our troubled hearts with His sure and gracious promises. Let us wrestle with God in prayer, as did Jacob at Peniel, and say to the Lord: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me!" And He, our faithful Covenant-God, will bless us, and guide and protect us all our days, and finally bring us to the Land of Promise, where we shall see Him face to face, and live in His visible communion forevermore. What a blessed Peniel that will be for us!

I leave Thee not! Thou art my Jesus ever,
 Though earth rebel,
 And death and hell
 Would from its steadfast hold my faith dis sever.
 Ah, no! I ever will
 Cling to my Helper still.
 Hear what my love is taught:
 Thou art my Jesus ever,
 I leave Thee not, I leave Thee not!

December 3.

The Lord, thy God, will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken. *Deut. 18, 15.*

Never again did a prophet arise in Israel like faithful Moses, the man after God's heart, whom the Lord knew face to face. The Lord was with him in all he did. Amid terrible signs and wonders he led the captive children of Israel out of Egypt and revealed to them the good and holy Law of God. In the words at the head of this lesson he foretells the advent of a great and faithful *Prophet* like unto himself who shall know Jehovah face to face; and that Prophet is our Lord Jesus Christ. In His prophetic office our Lord is like unto Moses; for He also declares the righteous and holy will of God in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5—7), and says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Yet our Lord is withal a far greater prophet than Moses was, for He does what even Moses could not do for himself nor for his brethren — He keeps the Law of God perfectly for all mankind and thus is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Rom. 10. "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," says John. John 1, 17. Our Lord, in His saving grace, won heaven for us; in His Gospel-truth He teaches us the way to heaven. Woe to them that now try to go to heaven by way of the Law, that is, by way of their own virtue and good works! They deceive themselves; for not he that *knoweth* the Law, but he that *doeth* it, shall live. But what sin-born mortal can keep God's holy Law? Not one! If he does not accept Christ as his Savior from sin and the curse of the Law, he is forever lost. Christmas is again at our door with the good news that Christ, our Prophet, who teaches us the way to heaven, is born, born for us. Let us hear *Him*.

Great Prophet of our God,
Our tongues shall bless Thy name;
By Thee the joyful news
Of our salvation came;
The joyful news of sins forgiven,
Of hell subdued and peace with heaven.

December 4.

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent; Thou art a priest forever after the order of Mel-chiz'-e-dek. *Ps. 110, 4.*

When Abraham returned from his battle against the heathen kings, he was met by Mel-chiz'-e-dek, King of Salem, who blessed him, and refreshed him with bread and wine. Hebrews 7 we read that Melchizedek also "abideth a priest continually." In this respect he is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in His high-priestly office. O blessed truth! We poor, needy sinners have a merciful High Priest in Christ, who is ever touched with the feeling of our infirmities, whose compassion for us never turns cold. In His adorable love He sacrificed Himself on the altar of the cross for our sins and obtained for us the everlasting righteousness we need in order to be saved. When we are weary with the battle against Satan, sin, and the world, He succors and refreshes our drooping faith with His precious body and blood under the bread and wine. He daily intercedes for us; for, says Hebrews (7, 25): "Having an unchangeable priesthood, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." And the Father at all times hears His prayers. His pleading saved us when we were unfruitful trees and divine wrath was ready to cut us down. His intercessions brought us into this new year of grace that we might bring forth more fruits meet for repentance. He is praying for us to-day that we might sanctify all our words and deeds to His service and the glory of His Father. Let us give ourselves anew to Him, and, trusting in His unwearied love, boldly come in our prayers to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. 4, 16.

Jesus, my great High Priest,
Offered His blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

My Advocate appears
For my defense on high;
The Father bows His ears,
And lays His thunders by.
Not all that hell or sin can say
Shall turn His heart, His love, away.

December 5.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just and having salvation. *Zech. 9, 9.*

When our Lord Jesus stood bound before Pilate, the Roman governor asked Him: "Art thou a king, then?" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." But Pilate sneeringly replied: "What is truth?" That is ever the contemptuous question put by carnal unbelief when confronted by divine, saving truth. How many there are who will not believe in the Gospel because they doubt the very existence of a living Christ! They cannot see Him and so will not believe in Him nor in His blessed truth. But what a fatal mistake! It is true that our Lord Jesus no longer dwells visibly among us, and so He will not come to us in this Advent season as He came to Jerusalem when He fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy. But should we for that reason doubt His existence? Nevermore! How many millions of British subjects never lay their eyes on their reigning sovereign; yet they never think of doubting his existence. In the flag, the law, and the coin of his realm they are daily reminded of their king's power and living presence. Are not we Christians surrounded likewise with overwhelming proofs of our King and Savior's power and existence? Wherever we look, we see His royal ensign, His blessed cross, pointing to the skies. In the astounding sacrifices which His loyal subjects have made and still make for Him in evangelizing and uplifting a sin-lost world, we have the rich coin and currency of His kingdom, faith which worketh by love. But it is chiefly His sweet Gospel that convinces us of His living personality. For by the Gospel He assures us of the forgiveness of our manifold sins, of our acceptance with the great Judge in heaven, and of our final salvation. How can we do otherwise than rejoice in these glad Advent days over the coming of our gracious and mighty King, mighty to save us now, mighty to save us eternally?

To Him who left the throne of heaven
To save mankind, all praise be given:
Like praise be to the Father done,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One.

December 6.

And He answered and said unto them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Luke 19, 40.

"Master, rebuke Thy disciples!" the angry Pharisees exclaim when hearing the disciples of our Lord singing their hosannas and joyfully extolling God for sending the long-promised Savior. But Jesus tells His caviling foes that it is so clearly the duty of His redeemed and believing followers to praise God for their salvation that, if they failed in it, the very stones would do it. — Nowadays the stones are crying out against the caviling enemies of Christ and His inspired Word. Many of their conceited scientists have loudly proclaimed that the Bible could not be true, because they had detected numerous statements in it that did not agree with the accepted facts of ancient history. However, the excavations being made in Bible lands are daily furnishing one proof after another that the Bible is true in every detail, much to the confusion of its carping critics. One day these boasting infidels will cry out in terror to the mountains and rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. 6, 16. Then will they see Him whom they mocked and crucified anew with their slander of His saving truth. We Christians, however, do not need these wonderful testimonies from the ruins in Bible lands to assure us of our faith. We have a more sure Word of Prophecy that has manifested its divine and saving power in our hearts and does so every day, and *that* shall not perish, though heaven and earth pass away. With God's help we will stick to our Bible in spite of the wide-spread unbelief of this degenerate age.

In vain would boasting reason find
The path to happiness and God;
Her weak directions leave the mind
Bewildered in a doubtful road.

Jesus, Thy words alone impart
Eternal life; on these I live;
Here sweeter comforts cheer my heart
Than all the powers of nature give.

December 7.

Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. *Rev. 3, 11.*

Advent time is waiting time, a time of waiting and watching for the coming of our Lord in glory. "This same Jesus," God's messengers say to the apostles gazing up into heaven, "shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Since then nineteen centuries have passed away, and still Jesus has not returned to lead His waiting and longing Bride home to glory. Why not? He Himself gives us the answer through His inspired Apostle Peter: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3, 9. When the last sinner whom He can possibly save with His Gospel has repented, then will He come. We know not when that will be, but He tells us that He will come quickly, when men least expect Him. Hence we dare never think as did the wicked servant: "My lord delayeth his coming," and grow secure and give ourselves to a life of sinful ease and unbelief. The Lord may come very quickly to each one of us. In the midst of life we are in death. And as death finds us, so will the Lord judge us. O that we may ever be prepared to meet Him and hold fast our crown which He gave us when He brought us to faith, the crown of everlasting life! How much it cost Him to win that glorious crown for us! And though for His sake we must often bear the cross here below, do we not know: "No cross, no crown"? Surely, the crown of everlasting life is worth praying for, living for, fighting for, if need be, dying for, as did the martyrs of old. Advent time is waiting time. God's children in the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Lord in the flesh, and *knew what they were waiting for*. Do we children of the New Testament always know and remember what we are waiting for?

He comes to judge the nations,
A terror to His foes,
A light of consolations
And blessed hope to those
Who love the Lord's appearing.
O glorious Sun, now come,
Send forth Thy beams so cheering,
And guide us safely home!

December 8.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Luke 21, 28.

"Come, let us all with one accord, Adore and magnify the Lord, And festive service pay On this the day that God hath blest, The day of peace and heavenly rest, The Lord's own holy day." Let us, above all, gladly rest our soul in the great and comforting Advent-promise: "Your redemption draweth nigh!" Luke 21, 25—36. Though men's hearts fail them for fear in these evil days, when sign after sign foretelling the great and terrible Day of Judgment is being fulfilled, we who are the Lord's can lift up our heads in joyful expectation; for all these terrifying signs are for us but unfolding buds on the tree of time pointing to our final and everlasting redemption. That will be our great *Emancipation Day*; for it will bring us eternal redemption from sin, which here still so easily besets us and causes us so many repentant tears. It will bring us eternal redemption from death, that here still frightens us so often with its scowling visage of sickness, pain, and sorrow at the grave of our loved ones. It will bring us eternal redemption from the power of the devil, who daily assails us with his temptations to misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Then all our trials and labors shall be forever at an end. God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and we shall be like them that dream for the great and everlasting joy that then is ours. Though we must all appear before the tribunal of divine Justice, we are saved and redeemed through the Word of the Savior: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life!" John 5, 24.

Then on this day let us adore
Our God and supplications pour
That, when worlds pass away,
Through Christ's dear grace
Our souls may rest
In peace and joy forever blest
Till the great Judgment Day. Amen.

December 9.

Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **My** words shall not pass away. *Luke 21, 32. 33.*

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, was an outspoken infidel. One day he asked General Zieten, one of his favorite officers, to give him a quick and short proof for the faith he held. "The Jews, Sire!" promptly replied the pious old soldier. Struck by the force of the argument, the King exclaimed: "You are right." Yes, the remarkable survival of the scattered Jewish race among the nations of the world is a striking proof for the truth of our Savior's Gospel. All other nations of antiquity have perished or have been absorbed by other races. The ancient Jewish race alone has preserved its identity to the present day. What is the reason? We answer: Because Almighty God has ordained it unto the end of time as a sign among all nations for the truth of His holy Word. As our Lord's prophecy concerning this ancient race has not failed, but stands fulfilled before our very eyes, so all His other predictions concerning the last evil days are coming to pass. Standing out from these premonitory events with terrible vividness looms the late World War, that engulfed in its deadly and wreck-strewn vortex the peace and happiness of half the world. Did it not call out to the nations with warning voice: "Prepare to meet your God"? But did this fearful visitation arouse men from their carnal sleep of sin and turn them to godly sorrow? Alas, they made their faces harder than a rock and refused to return to the Lord who corrected them. Jer. 5, 3. O that we might take to heart the loving warning of our Savior: "Watch ye, therefore, and pray *always*, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man!" Luke 21, 36.

Great God, to Thee my spirit clings,
Thy boundless love declaring;
One wondrous sight my comfort brings,
The Judge my nature wearing.
Beneath His cross I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet Him.

December 10.

There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. *Num. 24, 17.*

By his repeated attempts to destroy the chosen race of Israel did Satan, the old Evil Foe, eagerly try to prevent the promised Redeemer's coming into the world. Thus he put it into the heart of Pharaoh to decree that all the male children born in captive Israel should at once be put to death. But with His mighty arm the Lord rescued His people out of the hands of Pharaoh, and sent them forward on their journey to the Promised Land. Now Satan tries again to exterminate the chosen race. He instigates Balak, King of Moab, to bribe the mighty soothsayer of the East, Balaam, to come and weave his accursed web around Israel's wandering host that it might be easily overcome in battle and utterly destroyed. But under God's compelling hand, Balaam, instead of cursing, must bless Israel, announcing Moab's doom and giving forth the glorious Advent-message contained in our text. The Star of Jacob is, as we know, none other than our dear Lord Jesus Christ, who says of Himself (Rev. 22, 16) : "I am the Root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star." In God's appointed time the Star, long foretold, rose in all its lustrous beauty and shed its bright and saving beams on a world sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. Still that blessed Star sends out its mild and peaceful rays from Christ's holy Gospel; and all in vain do sin-blinded men try to destroy its heaven-born light. Can they pluck the stars out of the firmament? Just as little can they extinguish the bright light of Christ's saving Gospel. In majestic power it pursues its victorious course through the ages, and all that walk in its cheering ray sing with adoring and grateful heart:—

O Morning Star, how fair and bright
Thou beamest forth in truth and light!
O Sovereign meek and lowly!
Sweet Root of Jesse, David's Son,
My King and Bridegroom, Thou hast won
My heart to love Thee solely!
Lovely art Thou, fair and glorious,
All victorious, rich in blessing,
Rule and might o'er all possessing.

December 11.

And there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. *Is. 11, 1. 2.*

From a wide-spreading, noble tree that covered all Israel with its protecting branches, the kingly house of David, son of Jesse, had withered and decayed to an insignificant little stem at the time of our Savior's birth. All its former power and splendor had disappeared. Its few remaining descendants were poor and common folk, unknown even to their countrymen. Joseph, the foster-father of our Lord, was a hard-working carpenter, and his espoused wife, the Virgin Mary, a lowly, humble virgin. So poor were Mary and Joseph that they could not purchase a night's lodging with one of the citizens at Bethlehem when they came there to be taxed, but had to lodge in a stable. Here came forth the tender Branch out of the withered stem of Jesse; here Jesus, the Son of David, was born. But in that lowly Babe of Bethlehem dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In Him God was made manifest in the flesh. On Him rested the Spirit of God without measure, all the rich treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. He revealed the hidden counsels of God formed from the beginning of the world and taught man the way back to the heart of God. On Him rested the Spirit of counsel and might. When mankind lay hopelessly and helplessly lost in the power of sin and death, He took counsel and devised help and carried out the plan of our salvation in divine power and might. In Him we now have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Through His blessed Gospel He pours out on the nations the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God, and thus proves Himself to be the God-ordained Savior of the human race.

O blest the land, the city blest,
Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
O happy hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!
The cloudless Sun of joy He is,
Who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
O Comforter divine,
What boundless grace is Thine!

December 12.

For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come. *Hag.* 2, 6. 7.

Only a little while and Jesus will come! How long the children of the Old Covenant had to wait till the promise came to pass! How they cried and sighed: "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" "Watchman, what of the night?" But the long, long while was only a little while with our eternal God. When His hour struck, He sent forth His Son, and all nations were filled with tumult, and the very heavens burst their silent gates with jubilant song.— Only a little while and Jesus will come! The glad news of the Savior's birth has filled the earth and is still agitating the nations. Among all the tribes and tongues of men has Jesus, the King of grace and truth, found His loyal adherents. But as His Zion of old was covered with oppression and shame, so His New Testament Zion is assailed on all sides, and hears the mocking taunt: "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. 3, 4. With straining eyes and eager hearts Zion's battle-weary children look forward to His coming, and pray: "Come, even so, come, Lord Jesus!" And He answers them: "Surely, I come quickly." Rev. 22, 20. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." 2 Pet. 3, 8. Only a little while, and He will come and make an end of Zion's long and bitter warfare and lead her home to everlasting rest and glory.

A little while for patient vigil-keeping,
To face the stern, to battle with the strong;
A little while to sow the seed with weeping,
Then bind the sheaves and sing the harvest song.
A little while to keep the oil from failing,
A little while faith's flickering lamp to trim,
And then, the Bridegroom's coming footsteps hailing,
To haste to meet Him with the bridal hymn.

December 13.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. *Is. 7, 14.*

The virgin-birth of our blessed Lord has ever been a stumbling-block to proud human reason. Skeptics of all ages have assailed its divine story and declared it to be impossible because against the laws of nature. But what sinful presumption! Suppose the miraculous birth of our Savior to be against nature's known laws, is it therefore also against and beyond the power of Almighty God? Who will set restricting bounds to sovereign Omnipotence? With God nothing is impossible. We know from His infallible Word that the first man, Adam, had no human ancestor, but stepped forth immediately from the Creator's hands as "the son of God." Luke 3, 38. So the second Adam, Christ, has no human father, but is immediately the Son of God, however, in a far higher sense than the first Adam, for He is *Immanuel*, God with us, God made manifest in the flesh. The very first Gospel-promise which God gave Adam and Eve after the Fall implied that the coming Savior was to be virgin-born, for the promise clearly stated that the Seed of the *woman* should bruise the serpent's head. Hence Paul emphasizes the fact that God sent forth His Son, made of a *woman*. Gal. 4, 4. Mary's Child, while partaking of her human flesh and blood, had to be sinless and therefore had to be conceived by the Holy Ghost, that He might atone for our sinful conception and birth, and thus prove our Redeemer from the very beginning of His human life.

Immanuel, we sing Thy praise,
Thou Prince of life and Fount of grace
Thou Flower of heaven and Star of morn,
Thou Lord of lords, Thou Virgin-born.
Hallelujah!

With all Thy saints Thee, Lord, we sing,
Praise, honor, thanks to Thee we bring,
That Thou, O long-expected Guest,
Hast come at last to make us blest!
Hallelujah!

December 14.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. *Matt. 3, 1—3.*

With the incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the kingdom of heaven came down on earth. As foretold by Isaiah, Christ's immediate herald and forerunner, John the Baptist, appeared with his challenging message: "Repent ye! Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" But the carnal-minded Jews turned a deaf ear to his announcement, continued in their unrepenting ways, and so proved blind and indifferent to their Savior to their own temporal and eternal ruin. But is that not the reason why so many people remain unblessed and unhappy at Christmas because they are deaf to the admonition of this blessed Advent-tide: Prepare ye the way of the Lord? They are so taken up by the cares and worries of life, by their vain pursuit of happiness, that they never come to themselves, never realize their lost condition and their crying need of the Savior. Or they are so in love with their own sin-blotched self-righteousness that they think they need no repentance. Poor deluded souls! As long as they do not acknowledge their sinfulness before God with sincere repentance and thus fail to prepare the way of the Lord into their hearts, they will never find peace of conscience or true happiness, and must finally perish in their sins. Happy the man who feels his need of the Savior because he feels the burden of his sin! How he rejoices at hearing the glad Advent- and Christmas-message! Though the angels sing for joy at the birth of Christ, they know nothing of the greater joy and rapture that fills the heart of a repenting sinner who can truly sing: "Jesus, the Savior, is born for *me!*"

Redeemer, come! I open wide
My heart to Thee; here, Lord abide!
Let me Thy inner presence feel,
Thy grace and love in me reveal;
Thy Holy Spirit guide us on,
Until our glorious goal be won!
Eternal praise and fame
We offer to Thy name.

December 15.

Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?

Matt. 11, 3.

It is John the Baptist who puts this question to the Lord through the mouth of two of his disciples. He asks not for *his* sake, for he was no weak reed shaken by every passing wind; he never doubted his Savior. No; as a wise teacher he sends his doubting disciples direct to Christ, that they may learn the truth from Christ Himself and be freed from all misgiving in that most vital matter. Let us learn this wisdom from the faithful friend of the Bridegroom and in all our doubts and fears concerning our holy faith go directly to Christ and His blessed Word; for nowhere else can we learn the truth of God. However, there are many benighted souls in our time who are looking for a different Christ, for a religion different from the religion which the Gospel reveals. They claim that Christianity has gone bankrupt, and therefore they are trying to establish a newer and better religion, as they say. What fools they are! If all the gates of hell have not succeeded during all these centuries in overthrowing the Christian religion, how can these puny adversaries ever hope to supplant it? No; Christianity has not gone bankrupt. The Gospel of Christ is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The Lord points the doubting disciples of John to His divine works which clearly manifest Him as the expected Messiah. Is. 35. So we can point the doubters and infidels of our time to the manifest and divine fruits of Christ's saving Gospel: how it converts and civilizes the heathen and cannibals in foreign parts; how it regenerates and reforms so many drunkards, vicious sinners, and open unbelievers at home. What other religion has brought such manifest blessings to man as has the Christian faith? No; Christianity has not gone bankrupt; but these conceited unbelievers have become fools, professing themselves to be wise. Rom. 1, 22. Let them *do* the will of Him that sent Christ into the world, and they shall *know* of the doctrine whether it is of God or not. John 7, 17.

Let the earth now praise the Lord,
Who hath truly kept His Word,
And the sinners' Help and Friend
Now at last to us doth send.

What the fathers most desired,
What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year,
Stands fulfilled in glory here.

December 16.

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.

Matt. 11, 6.

Though the faithful forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, had directed his followers to Jesus as the promised Savior, some of his disciples hesitated to accept and follow the Lord, because they saw nothing in Him of that worldly power and glory which they, after their own foolish hearts, thought the Lord must possess. Thus they deprived themselves of all the divine blessings which Jesus gives to His followers. How about us? Do we no longer need to watch and pray that our deceitful hearts take no offense when the Lord's ways and providences do not agree with our foolish thoughts and conclusions? For instance: When we see Christ's Gospel so little believed in; when we see so many apparently good and moral people live so happily and so prosperously without the Gospel; when we see the Church torn and rent asunder by so many warring factions and false doctrines; when we see the lukewarmness, the worldly-mindedness, the indifference prevailing even in the Church of the pure Word and sacrament, — do we not often take offense and think: "Is it really worth while to be a Christian? Is the Gospel really all it claims to be?" Then let us remember these warning words of our Savior, remember what he foretold so clearly about the tares among the wheat, the rise of false prophets, the general rejection of His Word in the latter days; but let us also remember His sure promise, Luke 12, 32: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Or, when the Lord visits us with long and severe afflictions, how prone we are to think: "Why must just I suffer these things? I am no greater sinner than other people are, perhaps not as bad." Let us beware, and cling to His word and promise: "Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

On Jordan's banks the Herald's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh:
Come, then, and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every breast from sin,
Make straight the way for God within,
And let us all our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.

December 17.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord, Our Righteousness.

Jer. 23, 5. 6.

Whoever claims that a certain piece of property is his must prove his ownership by a duly certified deed. We poor bankrupt sinners, who have no righteousness of our own before God, but believe in our Savior, can make the astounding claim that the all-sufficient righteousness of the holy Son of God is verily ours. We can joyfully declare: "Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress, Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head. Bold shall I stand in that great day, For who aught to my charge shall lay? Fully through these absolved I am From sin and fear, from guilt and shame." What warranty have we for so great a claim? Here it is, signed, sealed, and delivered to us in the infallible "Court of Record," God's most holy Word, that tells us our Savior is *our* Righteousness. Who, then, can successfully dispute our claim to perfect righteousness in the sight of God? Let the devil come and whisper his malicious accusation: "You are a great, vile sinner and shall therefore be damned." We can say to him: "Get thee behind me, Satan. Here is the Lord, *my* Righteousness." Let our own heart condemn us; we can say to it: "Heart, you are not my judge, for God alone is that; and He has promised to be Himself *my* Righteousness." Let death come and terrify us with the memory of our many sins; we can exclaim with our expiring breath: "O Lord, my Righteousness, into Thy redeeming hands I commit my spirit." And there before the great judgment-throne, even there we shall not be condemned, but shall dwell in safety; for the King executing judgment and justice is the Lord, our Righteousness. O precious name of our Savior!

Jesus is the name we treasure,
Name beyond what words can tell;
Name of gladness, name of pleasure
Ear and heart delighting well;
Name of sweetness, passing
 measure,
Saving us from sin and hell.

Therefore we in love adoring
This most blessed name revere;
Holy Jesus, Thee imploring
So to write it in us here
That hereafter, heavenward
 soaring,
We may sing with angels there.

December 18.

He must increase, but I must decrease. *John 3, 30.*

The message of John the Baptist was bearing fruit. He had pointed his disciples and the multitude to Jesus as their true Messiah and Savior. Now he sees them forsaking him and following the Lord. But that does not fill him with sorrow, much less with envy; on the contrary, he rejoices at it, and declares: "He [Christ] must increase, but I [who am only His lowly servant] must decrease." As it was in the life of John, so is it in the life of every true Christian: Christ, his Savior, must increase in power, and honor, and influence over him, while he, the Christian, must decrease in his own eyes in self-importance and self-love and self-confidence. He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His. But the Spirit of Christ is one of humility. Though very God, equal with the Father in power and majesty, Christ made Himself of no reputation, but humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. With His humble submission even unto death He atoned for our inborn pride and vainglory that causes so much strife and pain in the world. But with His humble example before us, we are to learn of Him, to grow like Him in meekness and lowliness of heart. When we do that, really strive to follow His example, we shall grow more and more in the knowledge of our deep, sinful depravity, our utter unworthiness and helplessness to save ourselves, while our blessed Lord with His unmerited love of our poor souls, His daily pardon, and help, and comfort — grows more and more precious in our sight. The more we learn to forget self and live *in* and *for* our Savior, the more shall we attain to that "rest of soul" which He promises them that take upon themselves His easy yoke and light burden. This Advent-tide again teaches us how deeply our Lord humbled Himself for our sake in His blessed birth. May we learn to be His true followers!

My heart in lowliness abounds,
My soul with love is glowing,
And from My mouth are words and sounds
Of meekness overflowing.
My heart, My mind, My strength, My all
To God I yield, on Him I call.

I teach you to avoid and flee
What harms your soul's salvation,
Your heart to purify and free
From sin's abomination.
Your Rock and Fortress e'er am I,
And lead you to the life on high.

December 19.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the **Most Holy**. *Dan. 9, 24.*

Daniel here prophesies the time when our Savior should come and successfully carry out His great work of redemption. At the end of the prophetic seventy weeks, lo, He came of whom Daniel had such a wonderful vision, chapter 7, 13 and 14, whom he calls the "Son of Man," and whom he saw brought before the Ancient of Days to be crowned with universal and everlasting dominion and glory. This "Son of Man," he says here, is the Most Holy, without sin, harmless, undefiled, and higher than the heavens also after His human nature. He is anointed, not with symbolic oil, as the Jewish high priests, prophets, and kings were, but with the Oil of Gladness, with the Holy Spirit, for sacred office as our everlasting Prophet, Priest, and King. He finishes our transgression, redeems us from the exacting and condemning demands of Moses' Law which no one could perfectly keep. He makes an end of sins; for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin; and there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ. He makes reconciliation for iniquity, He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2, 2. He brings in everlasting righteousness. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." But our Lord Jesus won for us the righteousness that avails before God to all eternity. And, finally, He has sealed up the vision and prophecy. In Him all the prophecy, all the words of God, are fulfilled and find their yea and amen. We are not to expect new revelations. Our redemption in Christ is an accomplished fact.

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,

Ye ransomed from the Fall,

Hail Him, who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him Lord of all!

December 20.

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. *Gal. 4, 4, 5.*

Let the critics wrangle as much as they please about the seventy weeks in Daniel and the exact date of our Savior's birth; we know that our God never makes mistakes. He is never too early or too late in carrying out His wise designs. When the time came which He had fixed in His wisdom, He sent the promised Redeemer, His dear Son, to save this perishing world. And how did He send Him? Not in the bloom and vigor of full-grown manhood, but as a helpless infant, born of a virgin. And for what purpose? To become man's Substitute, and as such to assume all the obligations of the Law, suffer its curse for man's transgressions, and thus redeem man forever from its bondage and dire penalties. Since then God's appointed time of free and full salvation has come for all men. Now is the accepted time when every terrified sinner who feels his guilt and helplessness over against the exacting demands and crushing threats of the Law can flee to Christ and find in Him his loving Friend and Substitute, whose all-sufficient obedience to the Law for his sake sets him free from his slavish fear and even makes him a happy, trusting child of God. Can there be a greater badge of honor conferred on a poor, guilty mortal than to be called a child of God and be an heir of all the rich treasures and glories of God's eternal home in heaven? O what gratitude ought to fill our hearts in these happy Advent and Christmas days, gratitude to our heavenly Father for sending forth His Son! How we ought to sing with glowing tongue and heart:—

Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.

December 21.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice!

Phil. 4, 4.

Christmas is again at our door. Will it be a joyous, blessed Christmastide for us? What will prove the chief source of our Christmas happiness? The gifts of human love, the earthly joys and pleasures which the sacred season may bring us? Ah, no! All earthly joys vanish and die with the sputtering Christmas candles. Abiding and heart-satisfying joy can be found alone in God's adorable Christmas Gift—the Christ-child, the Savior. Again, for how many people the coming Christmas will seem a day of sorrow and sadness instead of joy and gladness! Some will have to spend it far from home among strangers; others, perhaps, on a bed of sickness; others again in deep worry about their daily bread; and others, finally, at the grave of their beloved dead who spent the last Christmas with them in health and happiness. With tears in their eyes, they will sigh and say: "How different, oh, how different this Christmas is!" But whoever opens his ears and heart to the joyful Christmas-message and takes the Christ-child into his arms of faith will have cause for joy in spite of all his grief and sorrow. For where the Lord, our Savior, is, there is joy, heaven-born joy, for He drives all care and worry and grief away with the sweet assurances of His divine love that loved us even unto death. Therefore rejoice in Him and His undying love. And for His sake remember in these days of joy and love the widows and orphans, the poor and sick and strangers in your midst. Bring them a token of your Christmas love, and gladden their mournful hearts with the happy Christmas-story.

Come, then, banish all your sadness,
One and all, Great and small,
Come with songs of gladness;
Love Him who with love is glowing.
Hail the Star Near and far
Light and joy bestowing!

Ye whose anguish knew no measure,
Weep no more, See the door
To celestial pleasure.
Cling to Him, for He will guide you
Where no cross, Pain or loss,
Can again betide you.

December 22.

The Lord is at hand. *Phil. 4, 5.*

The Epistle for the Fourth Sunday in Advent has the inspiring message: "The Lord is at hand." But a few more days, or hours, and the joyous Christmas-bells will again peal forth their happy song: "Joy to the world! the Lord is come: Let earth receive her King; Let every heart prepare Him room, And heaven and nature sing." Have we prepared Him room? Have we well employed these passing Advent days to make straight the paths of the coming King and Savior? Have we removed everything from our hearts and lives that could obstruct His coming to us with His saving grace and mercy? Behold, the Lord is at hand, the Lord who has loved us vile and unworthy sinners with an everlasting love and with loving-kindness would draw us nearer to His heart in the approaching Christmastide. That Lord is at hand who Himself brought us forgiveness and pardon and reconciliation; who became so poor for us in the manger and on the cross, that we through Him might be made everlastingly rich, rich in all-forgiving mercy, in loving companionship with God and all His holy angels, in unabating strength for life's fateful battle, in undying hope even in the hour of death. "He opens us again the door Of Paradise to-day; The cherub guards the gate no more. To God our thanks we pay." Can we truly sing these lines with joyful, grateful heart on Christmas Day? O that we might redeem the intervening days and hours and prepare our hearts for the Lord! "Behold," He says to us in these solemn Advent days, "behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Rev. 3, 20.

Behold, I knock! As yet I am *thy* Guest,
Waiting without for thee;
The time shall come when, homeless and distressed,
Thou, soul, shalt knock for Me;
To those who heard My voice ere 'twas too late,
I open in that hour My peaceful gate;
To those who scorned, a closed door will it be.
Behold, I knock!

December 23.

We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4, 19.

He loved us first, our gracious Lord; but why? What lovable and endearing beauty did He see in us to make Him, the holy Son of God, betroth us unto Himself in righteousness and in judgment and in loving-kindness and everlasting mercies? Ah, He saw nothing good in us; only the misery, and vileness, and rebellion of our sin-corrupted, dying hearts. "It was that mercy never ending, Which all conception far transcends, Of Him, who, with love's arms extending, To wretched sinners condescends; Whose heart with pity still doth break, Whether we seek Him, or forsake." In this His unmerited love He met us in baptism, clasped us in His arms, and cleansed us from the filth of sin, declaring: "Thou art Mine, and I am thine." With His love He protected, guided, and fed, and led us through all the critical years of our youth, and though we perhaps forgot His saving love and ran from His protecting side to taste the dangerous pleasures of the world, He did not forget us, but went after us, as the good shepherd goes after his lost sheep, and called to us in pitying love: "Son, daughter, why will you die? Return to Me, your Savior. Come now, and let us reason together: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Is. 1, 18. It is His love alone, His burning love, that has drawn our hearts to Him, that we can say: "We love Him." But, oh, how sadly we must often confess that our love for Him is so cold, so fickle, so lukewarm! O let us go daily to the manger in Bethlehem and see and ponder Christ's great love for us; and that will kindle ours for Him.

Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter ev'ry trembling heart.

December 24.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. *Micah 5, 2.*

O little town of Bethlehem!
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy darkness shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night!

How fondly our thoughts go back to the little town of our Savior's birth on these Christmas days! And how engaging is the story of this ancient and sacred village! Before its gates Jacob buried his beloved Rachel. Here pious and faithful Ruth gleaned and gathered her sheaves in the harvest-field of Boaz. Here her grandson, David, tended his father's flocks on the rugged hillsides. The little brook still murmurs in the green valley lying at the foot of the town from which the hunted shepherd-king so longed to drink in his great thirst. 2 Sam. 23, 15. Hither came Joseph and Mary when great David's greater Son was born in a lowly stable. How wonderful are the ways of God! Not in some lordly mansion of classic Athens or imperial Rome or even in templed Jerusalem, but in the poor, little hill-village, insignificant Bethlehem, the Ruler of Israel, the everlasting King of mercy and of peace, is born. But our God and Father in heaven always does thus. He scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts and exalts them of low degree. Luke 1, 51. 52. "How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His heaven. No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin, Where *meek* souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in."

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell:
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

December 25.

Christmas.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men! *Luke 2, 14.*

"My heart for very joy doth leap, My lips no more can silence keep; I, too, must sing with joyful song That sweetest ancient cradle-song." O dearest, dearest Jesus, how can we thank Thee sufficiently on this anniversary of Thy blessed birth; how sufficiently magnify and glorify Thy wondrous love divine in which Thou didst come to us in our poor human flesh and blood to save us forever from the guilt and fear and misery of our sin? We can only kneel with exulting and adoring hearts before Thy lowly manger, and repeat the jubilant ancient cradle-song: "Glory to God in the highest!" Aye, glory to God the *Father* who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; how should He not with Him also freely give us all things? Glory to God the *Son* in whom everlasting peace, relief from sin, sorrow, and death, has come on earth. Glory to God the *Holy Spirit* for proclaiming to dying men the glad tidings of God's good will in His incarnate Son. O dearest Savior, we pray Thee, come into our hearts to-day; cleanse them, rule and dwell in them forevermore! Come, we pray Thee, to all our poor, and sick, and grieving fellow-men, and make their bare and needy room, their lonely couch of pain, a Bethlehem full of joy, and peace, and loving confidence in Thee. Come to all poor, blinded Jews and heathen, and open their hearts and eyes to believe and see in Thee their only salvation. But above all we pray: "Ah! dearest Jesus, holy Child, Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled, Within *our* hearts, that they may be A quiet chamber kept for Thee" — until we join the glory-song of all the saints and holy angels in Thy Father's house above.

Glory be to God in heaven!
 Glory to His truth and grace!
 Glory to His boundless mercy,
 Saving our poor mortal race!
 Glory, glory,
 Let your hearts His gift embrace!
 Glory to our new-born Savior!
 Sinners all, His love adore!
 For He brings us peace and pardon,
 Opens wide glad heaven's door!
 Glory, glory,
 Sing with angels evermore!

F. W. H.

December 26.

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

Luke 2, 15.

So spake the pious shepherds, and “came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger,” and praised and glorified God. Let us go and do likewise. Happy children’s voices, singing at home or in church, have again invited us to kneel with the shepherds at the manger of Bethlehem and to “re-joice that a Savior from sin we can boast, And join in the song of the heavenly host.” Though Christmas may have lost much of its earthly joy and glitter for us older folks, though we may have grown much older and wiser and sadder since *we* sang the dear old Christmas songs of our childhood, we have not outgrown and never will outgrow the need of a Savior. “Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven!” Let us, then, go in childlike faith to Bethlehem, kneel in humble devotion before our new-born Savior, and say with Thomas: “My Lord and my God!” What good would a bushel of gold do us if it were not ours? What good will the Savior do us if He is not ours in childlike, trusting faith? He is given for us all. The Christmas joy belongs to *all* people, therefore to us, too, no matter what we are or have been. “Unto *you*,” the angel of the Lord declares, “Christ, the Savior, is born.” Then let us make Him ours and say to our doubting and grieving hearts: “Unto *us* a Child is born, unto *us* a Son is given — to be our Counselor in all the perplexities of life, our Mighty God to help us in all need, our Everlasting Father to whom we can confidently go with all our wants, our Prince of Peace to calm our weary souls.”

Come hither, ye faithful, triumphantly sing;
Come, see in the manger our Savior and King!
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
O come ye, come hither, to worship the Lord!

True Son of the Father, He comes from the skies;
To be born of a virgin He does not despise.
To Bethlehem hasten with joyful accord;
O come ye, come hither, to worship the Lord!

December 27.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. *Titus 2, 11. 12.*

The great, the glorious, the ever-adorable grace of God which Christmas brings us is, first of all, *redeeming* grace; for it brings us redemption from all the enemies of our soul and reunites us in blessed communion with our God and Creator. Then, secondly, this adorable grace is *universal* grace, including all men. If but one single person were excluded from it, then Christmas would not prove the universal joyous festival it now is. Who, then, would know that he or she is not the unhappy person forever debarred from God's saving grace, forever doomed to perish in sin? How happy we ought to be that it is not true, that it has no foundation in God's sure Word what the Calvinists teach, namely, that God from eternity has decreed to *pass by* with His saving grace the greater part of mankind! — But, in the third place, the grace of Christmas is also *sanctifying* grace; for it teaches and exhorts us to live soberly, that is, to lead a personally clean, moral, holy life; then to live righteously over against our neighbor, to love, help, and befriend him, as God's holy Law demands; and finally, to live godly, in true godliness before our Father in heaven, loving, serving, and obeying Him according to His divine Word. For this purpose Christ came, and "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." *Titus 2, 14.* But to lead such a holy life is beyond our own power. Only when the redeeming, universal, and sanctifying grace of Christmas lives in us by faith shall we strive to lead such a life.

Fling wide the portals of your heart;
Make it a temple set apart
From earthly use for heaven's employ,
Adorned with prayer, and love, and joy;
So shall your Sovereign enter in,
And new and nobler life begin.
To Thee, O God, be praise
For word, and deed, and grace!

December 28.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. *Luke 2, 19.*

Mary, the mother of our Lord, is a fine example of a humble Christian who takes his reason captive under the obedience of Christ and makes the Word of God his only rule and guide in matters of faith and life. Her glorious song which she sang after the Savior was announced to her — it is written *Luke 2, 46—55* — is a glowing proof of how the Holy Scriptures had entered into her daily life and become the very center of her soul and being; for almost every word she utters in her song is colored by some prophecy of divine promise contained in the Old Testament. From the gospel of Luke we can learn how she acquired this deep, faith-sustaining knowledge of Scripture: *She took time to remember and ponder the things she heard from God's holy lips.* How have we heard the saving Christmas-Gospel in these days? Has its joyous message found a warm, responsive echo in our hearts? Have we taken time to ponder all these things and learn what they mean for our personal life and faith? Ah, how many there are who prove such forgetful hearers of the glad Christmas-tidings and never receive any lasting blessing from the wonderful announcement: "Unto you is born a Savior!" They remain lukewarm hearers of the Word at other seasons also, they are cold and indifferent to prayer, and never take time to read their Bible, and so, when the storms of adversity come upon them, their supposed faith proves a rope of sand, their anchor does not hold within the veil. May we with God's gracious help, like Mary, take time to read and study our Bible; then we shall prove more than conquerors through Him that loved us, of whom all the prophets bear witness, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?

In every condition,—in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale, or abounding in wealth,
At home and abroad, on the land, on the sea,
As thy days may demand shall thy strength ever be.

December 29.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. *Luke 2, 29—32.*

Bowed down with the great weight of his many years, just and devout old Simeon enters the Temple at Jerusalem, where Joseph and Mary have brought the Child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the Law. Full of joy, the old patriarch takes the Child into his arms, and praises God in the well-known words which we have just read. We often sing these sacred words at the close of our church services; and happy, indeed, are we, if, like old Simeon, we are sincere servants of the Lord, our God, and if through the gracious work of His Holy Spirit, we have beheld our salvation in Jesus, and now wait for His manifestation in glory, as Simeon of old waited for His appearance in the flesh. Then can we, indeed, depart in peace to our homes, to the manifold duties and tribulations of this life. The peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep our hearts and minds secure in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Yes, then we can also depart this life in peace, when our time comes, even as did hoary old Simeon. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." But while we must all make this confession of the psalmist our own, especially to-day when we remember that the end of this year is near, we can also add with the inspired singer: "But the *mercy* of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, to such as keep His covenant." Ps. 103, 15—18. May we ever keep the Lord's covenant into which we entered with Him at our baptism; then we can depart this world in peace.

A few more years shall roll,
A few more seasons come,
And we shall be with those that rest
Asleep within the tomb.

'Tis but a little while,
And He shall come again,
Who died that we might live, who lives
That we with Him may reign.

Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day;
O wash me in Thy precious blood,
And take my sins away.

December 30.

Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. *Luke 24, 29.*

That was the invitation which the two disciples going to Emmaus extended to the risen Lord when He made as though He would have gone farther. — The year is hastening to its close. Solemnly it reminds us of the truth: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Ps. 90, 10. But by the grace of God we can look up to our everlasting Savior, who was born for us, too, on Christmas Day, who has brought life and immortality to light for us also, and in His blessed Gospel walked with us throughout the year. With those two disciples we can pray Him: "Abide with us!"

Abide, O dearest Jesus,
Among us with Thy grace,
That Satan may not harm us,
Nor we to sin give place.

Abide, O dear Redeemer,
Among us with Thy Word,
And thus now and hereafter
True peace and joy afford.

Abide with heavenly brightness
Among us, precious Light;
Thy truth direct, and keep us
From error's gloomy night.

Abide with richest blessings
Among us, bounteous Lord;
Let us in grace and wisdom
Grow daily through Thy Word.

Abide with Thy protection
Among us, Lord, our Strength,
Lest world and Satan fell us,
And overcome at length.

Abide, O faithful Savior
Among us with Thy love,
Grant steadfastness, and help us
To reach our home above.

December 31.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." *1 Sam. 7, 12.*

When Israel was about to cross the river Jordan into the Promised Land, the Ark of the Lord went before them, and, lo, the waters stood still on both sides, and Israel crossed safely to the other bank. In fervent gratitude for this wonderful help of his God, Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which carried the Ark of the Covenant stood. Josh. 4, 9. This passing year has been for us like a swift-flowing river full of treacherous waves and deadly quicksand and unseen dangerous rocks. But we have passed safely through; for our Ark, the blessed Word of our God, and in it our God and Savior Himself, parted the waves before us and brought us unharmed to the end of the year. Every month of the twelve represents an indelible record of God's untiring love and mercy toward us. For every month we also can take a memorial stone and build unto our ever-faithful God a grateful monument, as Joshua did there in Jordan. And on every stone we would have to carve with glowing and rejoicing heart the significant word which Samuel carved on his memorial stone at Mizpeh — *Ebenezer*, that is, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." "For what have all that live and move Through this wide world below, That does not from Thy bounteous love, O heavenly Father, flow? Thou feedest us from year to year, And constant dost abide; With ready help in time of fear Thou standest at our side." And we must confess even more. We must also sing with deep and reverent gratitude; "With patience dost Thou ever chide, And chasten'st sparingly; Thou castest all our sins aside, And drown'st them in the sea." No matter, then, what harrowing thoughts may trouble us on this last day of the passing year, we can joyfully declare: Ebenezer! "Hitherto hath the Lord helped." The help which He has given us in the past is a promise that He will help in the future. Therefore,

Cheer up, my heart, rejoice and sing,
A cheerful trust maintain;
For God, the Source of everything,
Thy Portion will remain.

He is thy Treasure, He thy Joy,
Thy Life, and Light, and Lord,
Thy Counselor when doubts annoy,
Thy Shield and great Reward.

PRAYERS.

Prayer for Good Friday.

Lamb of God, for sinners wounded, Sacrifice to cancel guilt,
None shall ever be confounded Who on Thee their hope have built.
O Thou crucified Redeemer, Thou our atoning Mercy-seat, whither
we can fly for peace and pardon, we beseech Thee, have mercy
on us. Give us to see in Thy vicarious sacrifice the greatness of
our sin and guilt, but also the surpassing greatness of Thy love
that would not let us perish in our sins. O bind our weak and
fickle heart to Thee with cords of undying gratitude, that we may
never forget Thy redeeming love, and in sincere and humble faith
may ever give ourselves to Thee in body and soul a living sacrifice.

O Lamb of God most holy!
Beneath th' accursed tree,
I kneel in awe and trembling,
And upward look to Thee.

Upon the cross of torture
Thou hangest all forlorn,
Thy tender hands are bleeding,
Thy feet with nails are torn.

A thorny crown surroundeth
Thy meek and patient brow,
And bitter pains are racking
Thy sinless body now.

My sins they are which wound Thee,
Which cause Thine anguish dread,
My sins the thorns have twisted,
Which pierce Thy holy head.

I sinned, and Thou dost suffer,
The Father's holy Child,
That stripes which mar the Sinless
Might heal the sin-defiled.

O Lamb of God most lowly!
So great, and yet so meek;
May we, when pride allures us,
Thy lowly spirit seek.

O Lamb of God most lovely!
To Thee our faith would flee;
Reveal to us Thy beauty,
And win our hearts to Thee. Amen.

Easter Sunday.

The Lord is risen indeed. *Luke 24, 34.*

O day of happy tidings, O blessed Easter Day, when our great Sin-bearer, our crucified Lord Jesus Christ, rises triumphantly from the grave and brings life and immortality to light! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Now the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings has dispelled the dark gloom of the grave and will never, never set again. Now we can sing with exulting hearts: "I am content! My Jesus is my Light, My radiant Sun of grace. His cheering rays beam blessings forth for all, Sweet comfort, hope, and peace. This Easter-sun brings life, salvation, And everlasting exultation. I am content!" O Thou risen and glorified Savior, Lord Jesus Christ, we pray Thee, give us to taste, on this happy day, of Thy glorious victory over death and the grave. Come to us and say to us as to weeping Mary there: "Why weepest thou?" Weep no more in guilty fear, like sorrowing Peter, over your sins; for, behold, I was delivered for your offenses, and was raised again for your justification. Weep no more in trembling fear at the thought of death; for "because I live, ye shall live also." Weep no more at the grave of your departed loved ones; for I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whosoever believeth in Me shall never die. Weep no more under your grievous afflictions; for I will not leave you comfortless, but will come to you and comfort you. O blessed Lord, help us to rise with Thee from the grave of sin, sorrow, and death, and to praise and glorify Thee with newness of holy, Christian life until we see Thee face to face in the land of undimmed light and happiness.

Awake, my heart, with gladness,
See what to-day is done!
How after gloom and sadness
Comes forth the glorious Sun!
My Savior there was laid
Where our bed must be made
When to the realms of light
Our spirit wings its flight.

I cleave now and forever,
To Christ, a member true;
My Head will leave me never,
Whate'er He passeth through;
He treads the world beneath
His feet, and conquers death
And hell, and breaks sin's thrall—
I'm with Him through it all.

He brings me to the portal
That opens into bliss,
Where, graved in words immortal,
This golden scripture is:
"Who there are scorned with Me,
Here with Me crowned shall be;
Who there with Me shall die,
Shall here be raised as I!" Amen.

Ascension Day.

Go to **My** brethren, and say unto them, **I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.** *John 20, 17.*

God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises! — Yes, I will sing praises unto Thee and gratefully extol Thee on this festival morning, O my exalted Savior, my God and my King. For Thou hast now fulfilled the gracious promise which Thou didst give to weeping Mary on Thy resurrection morning and through her to all Thy fearing disciples: “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.” O Rabboni, Thou exalted Lord and Master of life and death, of all things present and things to come, Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them. Having finished Thy great work of redemption, Thou dost ascend to Thy father in heaven, thereby forever to bridge the yawning gulf which our disobedience had fixed between us and our God. The curse is removed; God’s wrath appeased; peace established for all men with their Maker; the righteous and holy God can now again make His abode in the heart of redeemed and reconciled man. O adorable fact: through Thee God has again become *our* God, Thy Father *our* Father. We no longer need fear to come into His holy presence. Thou hast won for us His heart with all its exhaustless divine mercy and goodness. Now we can approach Him with all our wants, and needs, and sorrows with all boldness and confidence, even as dear children ask their dear father. For Thy sake He will hear and grant our requests; for Thou dost intercede for us and art not ashamed to call us poor, lost children of fallen Adam *Thy brethren*. With trembling joy do I now take that sweet name upon my praising lips, and humbly say: “O Thou my glorified, exalted elder Brother, Thou hast saved my soul from sin, and guilt, and everlasting shame! Oh, I thank and praise Thee for thy wonderful and adorable love! Forgive, oh, forgive my lukewarmness, my forgetfulness, my backslidings, in which I have so ill requited Thy great, undeserved love! Oh, draw my heart to Thee, that I may never forget Thee; help me to fix my affections henceforth on things above, where Thou art, my elder Brother, O Christ, my Love, until I see Thee face to face and praise Thee at Thy throne through endless ages! Amen.

Prayer for Pentecost.

O enter, Lord, Thy temple,
Be Thou my spirit's Guest,
Who gavest me, the earth-born,
A second birth more blest.
Thou in the Godhead, Lord,
Though here to dwell Thou deignest,
Forever equal reignest,
Art equally adored.

O enter, let me know Thee,
And feel Thy power within,
The power that breaks our fetters,
And rescues us from sin.
So wash and cleanse Thou me,
That I may serve Thee truly,
And render honor duly,
With perfect heart, to Thee.

'Tis Thou, O Spirit, teachest
The soul to pray aright;
Thy songs have sweetest music,
Thy prayers have wondrous might:
Unheard they cannot fall,
They pierce the highest heaven,
Till He His help hath given
Who surely helpeth all.

O Holy Spirit, hear us
And make our sorrow cease,
Thy scattered flock restore now
To union, joy, and peace;
Bid flourish once again
The lands by man forsaken,
The churches spoiled and shaken
By war's unhallowed train.

On those that rule our country
O shower Thy blessings down,
And in Thy loving-kindness
Adorn, as with a crown,
With piety our youth,
With godliness our nation,
That all, to gain salvation,
May know Thy heavenly truth.

Order our path in all things
According to Thy mind,
And when this life is over,
And all must be resigned,
O grant us then to die
With calm and fearless spirit,
And after death inherit
Eternal life on high. Amen.

The Festival of Holy Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. *Is. 6, 3.*

O Thou blessed Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: Thou dwellest in the light which no man can approach unto. No mortal eyes have ever seen Thee. No human being can sustain the brightness of Thy great majesty and glory. Yet hast Thou in Thy holy and infallible Word graciously revealed to man so much of the mystery of Thy eternal Godhead as he needs to know for his salvation. Taught by Thy sure and unmistakable Word, I believe and confess with all Thy true, believing children on earth, that in three distinct Persons of equal power and majesty Thou art the one true God, and beside Thee there is no other. O Thou blessed Trinity in undivided Unity, I thank and praise Thee for bringing me through Thy quickening Word to the knowledge of this one true, Christian faith without which no man can be saved. I thank Thee for having me baptized in Thy triune name, whereby Thou didst make me a child of Thy saving grace and a blessed heir of Thy everlasting glory. With all Thy angel hosts in heaven I worship and adore Thee on this festival morning, and declare with a joyful heart: Glory be to God the Father, who has created me, governed, nourished, and protected me with such divine, fatherly goodness and mercy from the day of my birth! Glory be to God the Son, coeternal with the Father, my dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has redeemed me from all my sin, from death, and from the power of the devil! Glory be to God the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and who has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps me in the true faith! To Thee, O Triune God, be all honor and power and glory, world without end! Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thanksgiving Day.

Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. *Ps. 106, 1.*

Almighty God, dear heavenly Father, Thy compassions fail not, and Thy boundless mercies are new upon us every morning. With all Thy grateful people we gather before Thy throne to-day to praise and glorify Thee for the manifold blessings which Thou hast bestowed upon us and our dear country during this present year. Thou hast given us the early and the latter rains, and gladdened us again with a bountiful harvest. Thou hast shielded us from war and famine and pestilence, and crowned the year with Thy goodness. Thou hast preserved to us our precious civil and religious liberties, and caused Thy holy Gospel to be preached among us for the salvation of our and our dear children's immortal souls. But where shall we begin, where end, when enumerating the gifts of Thy loving-kindness towards us? With pious Jacob we must declare that we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shown unto us, Thy servants. We pray Thee, give us Thy Holy Spirit that we may heartily acknowledge Thy merciful goodness toward us. Preserve us from vanity and presumption and help us to give all glory for what we are and have in home and state and church alone to Thee and Thy unmerited mercies in Christ. Make us willing to further Thy kingdom with our gifts of gratitude and to have compassion on our needy fellow-men. As Thou never growest weary in blessing us, let us never weary in doing good to all men, especially to those that are of the household of faith. Help us to walk this day and all the remaining days of our life in Thy holy, saving paths until we have reached our eternal home above, where we shall praise and thank Thee with all Thy singing saints forever and ever. Amen.

Praise to God, immortal praise,
For the love that crowns our days;
Bounteous source of ev'ry joy,
Let Thy praise our tongues employ;
All to Thee, our God, we owe,
Source whence all our blessings flow.

All the plenty summer pours;
Autumn's rich o'erflowing stores;
Flocks that whiten all the plain;
Yellow sheaves of ripened grain:
Lord, for these our souls shall raise
Grateful vows and solemn praise.

Peace, prosperity, and health,
Private bliss, and public wealth,
Knowledge with its gladdening streams,
Pure religion's holier beams:
Lord, for these our souls shall raise
Grateful vows and solemn praise.

As Thy prospering hand hath blest,
May we give Thee of our best;
And by deeds of kindly love
For Thy mercies grateful prove;
Singing thus through all our days
Praise to God, immortal praise.

Birthday Prayer.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. *Ps. 103, 1. 2.*

Dear heavenly Father, Thou hast granted me life and favor, and Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. On this return of my natal day do I praise and magnify Thy holy name for all the countless temporal and spiritual benefits which Thou hast showered on me also in the past year of my earthly pilgrimage. From how many perils didst Thou deliver me; how many dangers didst Thou avert; with what unfailing loving-kindness didst Thou daily watch over me, guide and protect me, that I have lived to see this morning of my birthday in peace and health and happiness! Verily, Thy compassions fail not; they are new every morning, and great is Thy faithfulness. O my dear heavenly Father, I confess that I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shown unto me. I humbly pray Thee for the sake of Thy dear Son, my blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to blot out all my many sins with which I have transgressed against Thee in the sinful weakness of my corrupted flesh also in the year now past. Remember not my manifold transgressions, but according to Thy boundless mercy remember me for Thy goodness' sake. Help me through Thy Holy Spirit to walk more faithfully in Thy saving paths throughout this new year of my life. Help me to grow in faith and love toward Thee and in charity toward my neighbor. Crown this new year for me with Thy divine blessing as Thou didst the old. Let Thy saving presence go with me, and help me to consecrate its fleeting days to Thy blessed service.

Should dark days of woe and sorrow come upon me, let them lead me nearer to Thee and Thy loving heart. Into Thy faithful hands do I now commit myself both body and soul, with all that I am and have. *Eb-en-e'-zer* — hitherto hast Thou helped me. Trusting under the shadow of Thy wing, I know Thou wilt help and guide and protect me from this time forth, and even forevermore.

The Lord hath helped me hitherto
By His surpassing favor;
His mercies ev'ry morn were new,
His kindness did not waver.
God hitherto hath been my Guide,
Hath pleasures hitherto supplied,
And hitherto hath helped me.

I praise and thank Thee, Lord my God,
For Thine abundant blessing
Which heretofore Thou hast bestowed
And I am still possessing.
Inscribe this on my memory:
The Lord hath done great things for me,
And graciously hath helped me.

Help me in future, God of grace,
Help me on each occasion,
Help me in each and ev'ry place,
Help me through Jesus' Passion;
Help me in life and death, O God,
Help me through Jesus' dying blood,
Help me as Thou hast helped me! Amen.

A Morning Prayer.

Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God; for unto Thee will I pray. My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up. *Ps. 5, 1—3.*

O merciful God and Father in heaven, Thou faithful Keeper of Israel! Thou dost neither slumber nor sleep. Again hast Thou watched over me and mine so tenderly during the recent night and permitted no evil to befall me, neither any plague to come nigh my dwelling. By Thy gracious favor I again behold the light of a new-born day and can again enter on the discharge of my accustomed duties. I do not know what this day may bring

forth, what sore trials and temptations it may have in store for me. But I do know that my times and all the changeful circumstances of my earthly existence are in Thy divine father hand. Come what may, I know that Thou wilt be with me to support and comfort me with Thine omnipotent power; for I am Thy beloved child in Christ Jesus, my blessed Savior. For His dear sake Thou wilt prove my shield and buckler, wilt grant success to my labors, guard against all danger, supply the needed grace to resist all sinful temptations, and, if death should betide, wilt take me into my better home above, the everlasting rest of Thy saints in heaven. Into Thy almighty and loving hand I commit myself and all those near and dear to me. Help them, help me, to approve ourselves faithful stewards of Thy manifold and gracious gifts, to spend this new day, which Thy mercy has given us, in Thy holy service for our own salvation and the welfare of our fellow-men. And now may Thy beauty be upon us, O Lord, our God, and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labor to pursue,
Thee, only Thee, resolved to know,
In all I think, or speak, or do.

The task Thy wisdom hath assigned
Oh, let me cheerfully fulfil;
In all my works Thy presence find,
And prove Thy good and perfect will.

Give me to bear Thy easy yoke,
And every moment watch and pray;
And still to things eternal look,
And hasten to Thy glorious Day.

Shorter Morning Prayers.

1.

I thank Thee, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray Thee that Thou wouldst keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen. LUTHER.

2.

I thank Thee, most gracious God and Father, for so mercifully guarding and keeping me this night and again permitting me to see this day, that I may receive Thy eternal blessings. O holy Father, cleanse my heart by pure faith and inflame it with the fire of Thy love, that I may, with body and soul, offer myself unto Thee, and Thou mayest perform in me every good thing. Make me to know Thy dear Son, that I may forsake this world and its lusts, close this day in Thy service, grow in goodness, wax strong in the spirit, and abide in Thy grace forever. Amen.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL HYMNAL.

3.

My Father, for another night
Of quiet sleep and rest,
For all the joy of morning light,
Thy holy name be blest.

Now with the new-born day I give
Myself anew to Thee,
That as Thou wilt I may live,
And what Thou wilt be.

Whate'er I do, things great and small,
Whate'er I speak or frame,
Thy glory may I seek in all,
Do all in Jesus' name.

My Father, for His sake I pray
Thy child accept and bless;
And lead me by Thy grace to-day
In paths of righteousness. Amen.

An Evening Prayer.

Lord, I cry unto Thee; make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice when I cry unto Thee. Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. *Ps. 141, 1, 2.*

Dear heavenly Father, we, Thy redeemed children, come into Thy holy presence this evening with hearts and hands lifted up to Thee in gratitude for all the unmerited blessings Thy goodness

has vouchsafed to us during the course of another day. Thou hast been with us and graciously kept us from all harm and evil while blessing us so abundantly in our chosen calling. Verily, what we have and are we owe alone to Thy great fatherly love and kindness and must therefore declare: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; because His mercy endureth forever." Yet, heavenly Father, we know that we have not passed this day without giving offense in Thy sight; for our hearts are evil from youth up, and we so easily transgress Thy holy Law in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we humbly and contritely pray Thee to forgive us all our shortcomings for the sake of Thy dear Son, our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has atoned also for all our sins and guilt with His holy, divine, and precious blood. In Thy great mercy cleanse us from all secret faults, and through Thy Holy Spirit keep us from presumptuous sins. Set Thy holy angel-guard around us and our dwelling. Grant us sweet repose under the shadow of Thy wing. Be with our loved ones near or far, and keep them steadfast with us in the saving truth as it is in Jesus. Be with all Thy suffering and weeping children this night. Grant them a merciful respite from pain and sorrow, and lead them through their affliction nearer to Thee and Thine eternal recompense. Bless all our pastors, teachers, missionaries, and churches, and make them faithful laborers in the cause of Thy holy Gospel unto the salvation of many souls.

Savior, breathe an evening blessing,
Ere repose our spirits seal;
Sin and want we come confessing;
Thou canst save and Thou canst heal.

Though the night be dark and dreary,
Darkness cannot hide from Thee;
Thou art He who, never weary,
Watchest where Thy people be.

Though destruction walk around us,
Though the arrows past us fly,
Angel-guards from Thee surround us;
We are safe if Thou art nigh.

Be Thou nigh, should death o'ertake us;
Jesus, then our refuge be,
And in paradise awake us,
There to rest in peace with Thee.

Father, to Thy holy keeping
Humbly we ourselves resign.
Savior, who hast slept our sleeping,
Make our slumbers pure as Thine.

Blessed Spirit, brooding o'er us,
Chase the darkness of our night,
Till the perfect day before us
Breaks in everlasting light.

Our Father, who art in heaven; Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Lord bless us, and keep us.

The Lord make His face shine upon us, and be gracious unto us.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon us, and give us peace.

Shorter Evening Prayers.

1.

I thank Thee, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast graciously kept me this day; and I pray Thee that Thou wouldst forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

LUTHER.

2.

In Thy name, dear Lord Jesus, will I now lay me down to rest. In Thy good time grant unto me, by Thy grace, rest everlasting, that I may fall asleep in Thee, rise again with rejoicing, and enter into Thy everlasting glory. Amen.

3.

O almighty and everlasting God, I give thanks unto Thee because Thou this day hast kept me, Thine unworthy servant, not for my merits', but for Thy mercy's sake; and pray Thee, O most

merciful God, to make me to spend this night with a pure body and heart, that I may arise well and strong further to serve, bless, and praise Thee; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL HYMNAL.

4.

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take;
And this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5.

The shadows of the evening hours
Fall from the dark'ning sky;
Upon the fragrance of the flow'rs
The dews of evening lie;
Before Thy throne, O Lord of heav'n,
We kneel at close of day;
Look on Thy children from on high,
And hear us while we pray.

The sorrows of Thy servants, Lord,
Oh, do not Thou despise,
But let the incense of our prayers
Before Thy mercy rise.

The brightness of the coming night
Upon the darkness rolls;
With hopes of future glory chase
The shadows from our souls.

Slowly the rays of daylight fade;
So fade within the heart
The hopes in earthly love and joy
That, one by one, depart;
Slowly the bright stars, one by one,
Within the heavens shine.
Give us, O Lord, fresh hopes in heav'n,
And trust in things divine.

Let peace, O Lord, Thy peace, O God,
Upon our souls descend;
From midnight fears and perils Thou
Our trembling hearts defend.
Give us a respite from our toil,
Calm and subdue our woes;
Through the long day we labor, Lord,
Oh, give us now repose!

Prayers in Sickness.

A Morning Prayer.

O Thou faithful God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I thank and praise Thee that Thou hast so mercifully kept, protected, and strengthened me in my weakness. In Jesus' name turn unto me to-day and the remaining days of my life, cleanse me from my sin, comfort me by Thy grace, strengthen me by Thy power, lead me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may live and suffer in accordance with Thy will. I commit my sick body and my soul into Thy holy hands; let Thy holy angel have charge concerning me that the wicked foe may have no power or influence over me; through Jesus Christ, our only Comfort and Redeemer, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

An Evening Prayer.

Thanks be unto Thee, my God and Father, that Thou hast this day so mercifully succored me. Thy grace, Thy power, Thy comfort, and Thy Spirit be with me in my sickness and help me also through this night. I commit my body and soul into Thy hands. Let Thy holy angels have charge concerning me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me; through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord. Amen.

Thanksgiving after Recovery.

I thank Thee, Lord, almighty God, that Thou hast so paternally visited and chastised me on account of my sins. But, my God, I see that my sickness was not unto death, but unto the glory of God, that Thou, my Lord Jesus Christ, mightest thereby be

glorified. For Thou hast had mercy upon me, and hast cast all my sins behind Thee, and hast prolonged my life. I heartily thank Thee, my God, that Thou hast revived and strengthened me, so that I can behold Thy holy temple and attend to my duties. Thy goodness it is, O Lord: else should I long since have perished. Oh, how often will I think of Thy chastening rod, and will fear Thee all my life, and guard against Thy wrath! Help now, O Lord, my God, that with renewed health I may also begin a new life. Grant that I may always glorify Thy name, and that Thy praise may be continually found in my mouth. Guide me by Thy Holy Spirit that I may live to Thy honor, and not yield my members as instruments of unrighteousness to serve sin, but as instruments of righteousness to serve Thee, my God, that I may sing Thy hymns, and praise and glorify Thee in Thy Church. Amen.

Prayers in the Hour of Death.

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. *Rom. 8, 33. 34.*

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully through these absolved I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

Almighty God, Thou Father of mercies and God of all consolation, have mercy upon me, as a father hath mercy upon his children. Remember that Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, became man for my sake. Remember that Thou didst so love the world that Thou gavest Thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. In this faith my soul comes to Thee and brings with it Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast given me; for His sake do Thou remember

me and receive me into Thy grace. To Thee I commend my soul. Let me, Thy dear child, remain in Thy grace, and have mercy upon me while I live and when I die; for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. *Acts 7, 59.*

When hence I must betake me,
Lord, do not Thou depart!
O nevermore forsake me
When death is at my heart!
When soul and body languish,
O leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish
By virtue of Thine own!

Be Thou my Consolation
And Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy Passion
When my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee.
Who dieth thus dies well. Amen.

Table Prayers.

Grace before Meat.

Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest,
And let this meal to us be blest. Amen.

Heavenly Father, bless this food
To Thy glory and our good. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we pray Thee, strengthen and nourish our bodies through the food set before us, and also graciously strengthen and nourish our souls through Thy love and mercy for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. Amen.

At a Wedding-Feast.

Thou blessed Savior, Lord Jesus Christ, we pray Thee to be present at this festive board and to sanctify its meat and drink to us as Thou didst at the wedding-feast in Cana. Bless the bride and bridegroom and all present, and in Thy great love, O Bridegroom of our souls, make us partakers of Thy wedding-feast in heaven. Amen.

Grace after Meat.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; because His mercy endureth forever. Amen.

Our God be thanked for meat and drink through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this present refreshment and for all Thy countless mercies and benefits. We pray Thee for Jesus' sake, as Thou hast now fed our bodies, graciously to feed our souls with the manna from heaven, even the Bread of Life. Amen.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast been our guest,
We thank Thee for the food so blest.
Oh, may Thy grace to us be given
One day to be Thy guests in heaven. Amen.

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